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ADVENTURE

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Adventure

Hugh Pendexter
Barry Scobee
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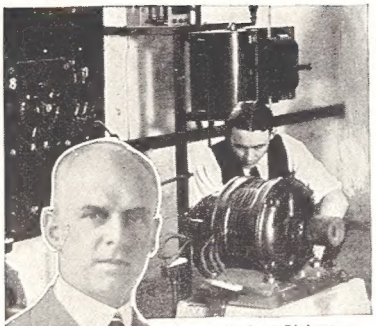
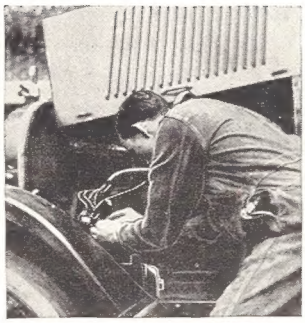
Sidney Herschel Small
Michael J. Phillips
E. S. Pladwell
Frederick Moore
James Sharp Eldredge

3 Complete Novelettes

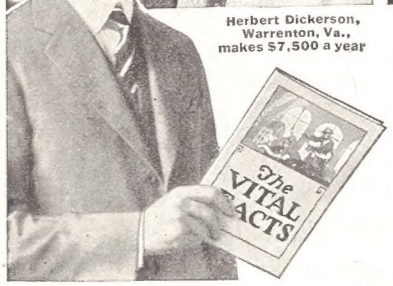


Herbert Dickerson, Warrenton, Va., makes $7,500 a year



Automotive Electricity pays W. E. Pence, Albany, Ore., over $9,000 a year

J. R. Morgan, Columbus, Ohio, makes $30 to $50 a day in business for himself



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Volume 51
Number 3

Eat your ABC's

ACCORDING to the American Medical Association vitamins are constituents of foods essential to health. Three are known at present designated as Vitamins A, B and C. (see chart).

A deficiency of "A" in the diet may result in symptoms of rickets and a disease of the eyes as well as lack of normal development.

A deficiency of "B" may result in the loss of appetite and symptoms of a disease of the nerves called beri-beri.

A deficiency of "C" may result in symptoms of scurvy.

A deficiency of *any* of the vitamins in the diet of children will result in impaired growth and health.

Many physical ailments could be avoided by proper attention to food. Some "prepared" foods have been robbed of health-giving elements which Nature put in them.

Nutrition is an individual problem which varies according to age. For instance, the person of advancing years needs more "roughage" than a child—roughage in the form of whole wheat, whole cereals, bran or bulky vegetables and fruits.

Variety in the diet is absolutely essential. The mistake that many people make is in neglecting to use enough milk, whole wheat bread, fruits, vegetables; also whole grain cereals from which the outer covering has not been removed—rice, wheat, oats, corn, barley—the *natural* foods in which vitamins and minerals are most plentiful.

Make no mistake—the most important health law is the law of keeping well by eating the right food.

Vitamins in Foods

	"A"	"B"	"C"
BREAD, WHITE (WATER)	?	+	–
" , " (MILK)	+	+	?
" WHOLE WHEAT (WATER)	+	++	?
" , " (MILK)	++	++	?
BARLEY (WHOLE)	+	++	–
CORN, YELLOW	+	++	–
OATS	+	++	–
MEAT, LEAN	–"+	+?	+?
BEEF FAT	+	–	–
MUTTON FAT	+	–	–
PIG KIDNEY FAT	++	–	–
OLEOMARGARINE	+	–	–
LIVER	++	++	+
KIDNEY	++	++	+?
BRAINS	+	++	+?
SWEETBREADS	+	+	●
FISH, LEAN	–	+	●
" , FAT	+	+	●
" , ROE	+	++	+?
MILK, FRESH	+++	++	+V
" , CONDENSED	+++	++	+V
" , DRIED, (WHOLE)	+++	++	+V
" , SKIMMED	+	++	+V
BUTTERMILK	+	++	+V
CREAM	+++	++	+V
BUTTER	+++	–	–
CHEESE	++	●	●
COTTAGE CHEESE	+	●	●
EGGS	++	+	+?
ALMONDS	+	+	●
COCONUT	+	++	●
HICKORY NUTS	●	++	●
PEANUTS	+	++	●
PECANS	●	+	●
WALNUTS	●	++	●

	"A"	"B"	"C"
TOMATOES (RAW OR CANNED)	++	+++	+++
BEANS, KIDNEY	●	+++	●
" , NAVY	●	+++	–
" , STRING (FRESH)	++	++	++
CABBAGE, FRESH, RAW	+	+++	+?
" , COOKED	+	++	+?
CARROTS, FRESH, RAW	++	++	++
" , COOKED	++	+	+
CAULIFLOWER	+	++	+
CELERY	●	+	●
CUCUMBER	●	+	●
DANDELION GREENS	++	++	+
EGGPLANT, DRIED	●	++	●
LETTUCE	++	++	+++
ONIONS	●	++	++
PARSNIP	–?	++	●
PEAS	++	++	+?
POTATOES (BOILED IS MIN.)	●	++	+?
" (" 1 HOUR)	●	++	+?
" (BAKED)	●	++	+
SWEET POTATOES	++	+	●
RADISH	●	+	●
RUTABAGA	–?	++	+++?
SPINACH, FRESH	+++	+++	●
" , DRIED	+++	++	●
SQUASH, HUBBARD	++	●	●
TURNIPS	–?	++	●
APPLES	+	+	+
BANANAS	+?	+?	+
GRAPE JUICE	●	+	+
GRAPEFRUIT	●	++	++
LEMON JUICE	●	++	+++
ORANGE JUICE	+	++	+++
PRUNES	●	+	–
RASPBERRIES (FRESH OR CANNED)	●	●	+++

+ ··contains the Vitamin
++ ···good source of the Vitamin
+++ ···excellent source of the Vitamin
– ···no appreciable amount of the Vitamin
? ···doubt as to presence or relative amount
● ···evidence lacking or insufficient
V ···variable

A WELL BALANCED DAILY DIET

1. Milk—a quart for a child, a pint for an adult—as a beverage or used in cooking.
2. Vegetables—Two daily.
3. Fresh Fruits—At least once daily.
4. Meat, or Fish, or Eggs or Cheese or Beans or Lentils.
5. Bread and Cereals—Preferably whole wheat and other entire grain.
6. Fat—Butter or other fat in some form every day.
7. Sweets—Best when taken in a moderate amount at mealtime.

Keep this page where you can refer to it readily for guidance. If upon your judgment depends the choice of food for your family, remember that you have their health in your keeping.

Good food is not necessarily expensive. The cheapest food is often most nutritious. The most expensive food is frequently harmful. The important thing is wise selection. Select your diet from the Vitamin Chart on this page so that the proportions of Vitamins A, B, C are equally well balanced.

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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One Complete Novel and Two Complete Novelettes

WHEN *Burney* tried to gyp "*Happy*" *Gaxton* out of his oil acreage in Texas, he started something that involved intricate aviation and even more intricate poker. "OIL—AND THE TROUBLED WATERS," is a novelette by Thomson Burtis, complete in the next issue.

INGI'S throne tottered, his followers were deserting him; in his extremity he called on *Swain* to help him, and the Orkneyman went to his aid though the king's cause seemed hopeless. "SWAIN'S FOLLY," a complete novel by Arthur D. Howden Smith, is in the next issue.

MANDELL wanted a decoration. He also wanted to be a good fellow, but his loud mouth prevented him from getting along with his outfit in the A. E. F. Then came the time of trial. "MUTE AND INGLORIOUS," in the next issue, is a complete novelette of the war in France, by Larry Barretto.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

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Are you dragging yourself about from day to day always ailing and complaining—always tired and despondent—suffering from Backache, Indigestion, Constipation, Dyspepsia, Nervousness, Vital Depletion, etc., etc., your Biliousness showing in your face—your lack of energy in your eyes? Have you and your family given up hope that you will ever be a real man again, achieve success and amount to anything in the world? Have you lost ambition and allowed your youthful ideals to slip down into the bog of physical defects and unfitness? Then, **you** are the man I want to help.

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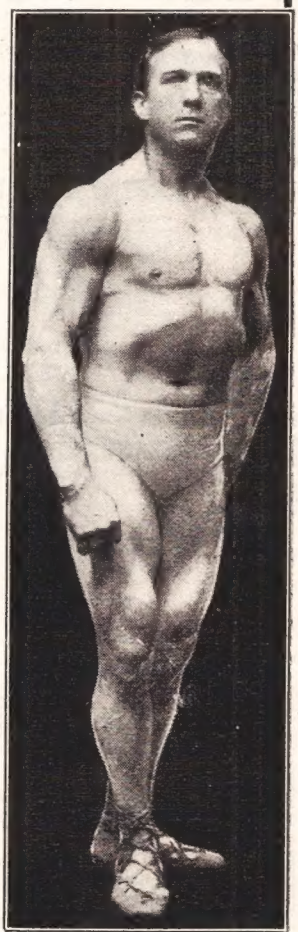

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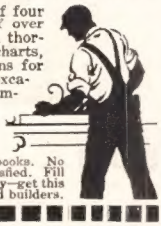

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(A letter from Mr. W. L. King of Washington, D. C.)

February 28, 1925
Volume LI, No. 3

Adventure

The Secret of the Timor Laut

A Complete Novelette

by Frederick Moore

Author of "The Pirate of Andrus Island," "God of the Sakai," etc.

"WHO is this Mr. Ross, the other passenger—I mean, his real name?"

The question was asked in a low tone from the lee side of the schooner *Tamil*, and from the shadow of the corner of the cabin bulkhead that jutted up from the quarterdeck. The words were smooth and insinuating, and volunteered a confidence, for the passenger whose name had been mentioned was below in the main cabin and within hearing distance of the open companionway which led below.

Captain Grafton was standing with his elbows leaning on the edge of the cabin roof, staring forward and smoking a cigar. His figure was blackly outlined against the moon astern. At the question, he turned his head to the lee side, and the glow on the end of his cigar became invisible as it came into the bright tropical moonlight.

"Has this Ross got another name?" he asked, surprize in his counter question. But he kept his tone low, as if meeting the cautious words of the questioner.

"I rather suspect it," came the answer. "You know the China coast—and skippers and mates and sailors and ship-runners and so on. I thought you'd have an idea—but might want to keep it to yourself."

Captain Grafton looked up at the drawing sails, bellied and taut, standing out whitely in the brilliance that struck aslant from astern of the scudding schooner. He seemed deep in thought for several minutes, sucking at his cigar with slow deliberation.

"Yes," he finally admitted. "I know lots of folks up and down the coast, and the islands to the south'ard here, too, for that

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matter. But I never saw this man Ross before, Mr. Marsh."

The man in the shadow of the deckhouse stood up and walked aft into the clear of the quarterdeck. Marsh was a young man, his face thin and clearly revealed now to Captain Grafton in the strong light. The passenger was clad in carefully creased white duck trousers, a white shirt open at the neck, and white shoes. He wore nothing on his head, and his hair ruffled back in disorder as he faced the wind.

"Maybe you didn't see him before," admitted Marsh.

"Say, look here!" said Grafton, low and grumblingly, as if annoyed, "what do you know, anyway?"

"I don't know anything," said Marsh, facing the skipper and balancing himself easily against the roll of the vessel. "I just wanted to find out if you did."

His voice fell away into a whisper, for the voice of Ross, old and cracked and querulous, came up through the companion and the skylight as he fretted at the cabin boy for being slow with making up the bunk.

Captain Grafton drew away from the lip of the cabin trunk, silent, wondering and bothered, obviously. For a minute he stood with his head down and a trifle forward, as if he intended to spring upon Marsh and shake any secrets he might have out of him. He coughed grumblingly and harshly in what might have been a threatening growl.

"You know as much as I do," he said in a minute, his voice revealing an angry rasp. But still he was willing to keep his tones so low that they could not reach below to Ross.

Marsh gave a chuckling little laugh.

"Maybe I know more than you do, Cap'n. There's a chance that I do, you know."

"Then keep it to yourself aboard me," grumbled Grafton.

He turned away, his pajamas slapping windily about his legs, and walked over to stare into the binnacle over the shoulder of the native sailor at the wheel. The up-glow from the yellow light of the compass showed that his weatherbeaten face was hard set with a grimness about the mouth, and his forehead ruffled with an anger that sprang from a baffled curiosity. His face was round and moonlike, but the roundness of his head hinted at a pugnacity not to be trifled with.

He studied the card for a minute, then turned away to windward and looked at the black spots nearly abeam—tropical islands they were, strung along like hay cocks on a smooth and glittering field.

Suddenly he swung round again toward Marsh, grunted deep in his throat, and marched toward the young man with determined steps. The skipper's slippered feet rattled over the deck in a swift staccato.

Marsh stood his ground before him, and the skipper stopped within a foot of the young passenger—face to face they stood for a couple of seconds.

"You tell me what you've got to tell about—" he skipped a word but jerked a thumb in the direction of the open scuttle of the companion—"or shut up about it."

Marsh laughed lightly—and knowingly. He plainly intended that Captain Grafton should understand that there were facts about Mr. Ross which might be interesting—and it was just as plain that Marsh was going to be mysterious with his hidden knowledge until he had the skipper of the *Tamil* on edge to know the secret. That minute, apparently, had arrived, for he spoke at once when he had finished his snickering laugh.

"Perhaps," he said softly, "you think Mr. Ross is what he pretends to be: A small ship-chandler at Amoy, who is going to Nyata Island with the idea of taking up land for a copra plantation?"

Grafton stared in silence for a minute and then crossed the deck in a swift waddle, his slippers brushing over the planks. He sucked his teeth, threw his cigar into the air to leeward with a nervous toss, and came back again to Marsh.

"That's exactly what Mr. Ross is—a ship-chandler of Amoy, young man. I don't like this way you have, and I'm a frank man, but don't make me suspicious of an honest man and then shut your trap. I don't like it—me, I'm open and above-board."

"Then why don't you speak out loud and strong, so they can hear you below?" asked Marsh, a sneer in his words.

"Because if you've got anything to say, I'm willin' to listen, so shoot or give up the gun."

"What makes you so sure, Cap'n, that Ross is what you say he is—an honest man? I'll answer it myself—you don't *know*, and you think you can draw me by bluffing. But I know a thing or two you don't on this little matter, so cut the bluff."

"Well, what you got to say?" persisted Grafton.

"Nothing—if you're going to pull this bulldozing on me. I can tell you something to your interest, and mine, if you'll come down off your high horse. I've got to deal with a man I can trust—and I've an idea I can trust you."

Grafton squinted up at the sail.

"Well," he said finally, "you've shot off your face too much to go aback now. You can't hint around about my other passenger, and then snub short on it and clam up. If you can't trust me, I'll take you below and ask Mr. Ross about it—and let him defend himself and cough up who and what he is."

There was a quiet earnestness which left no doubt about Grafton's willingness to turn the tables on Marsh and force his hand in the matter. Captain Grafton might be a stolid and thick-headed man, but he had a way of gaining his will that was equal to the oily subtlety of Marsh.

"You can spill the beans if you want to," said Marsh. "It'll cost you a pretty penny, I can tell you that. But as a matter of fact you've some doubts about Ross yourself, Cap'n—you're a keen man."

The flattery struck the mark. The one thing Grafton was proud of outside his business of sailing master was his keenness.

"Eh! You've noticed I'm keen, eh! Well, yes, I have had a doubt or two about this Ross, as he calls himself. But I keep my own counsel fairly well. However, you've broached the subject, so I'd like to know what you're drivin' at, young feller."

"You don't know who Ross is *now*," charged Marsh.

"No, can't say that I do."

Marsh leaned back against the top of the cabin trunk.

"Then you probably will before we make Nyata Island—I'll leave that much to you, Cap'n."

Captain Grafton slapped a hand on Marsh's shoulder in confidential good fellowship.

"Now look here, Marsh, I like you. And I've been watchin' you since we slipped Amoy. Knew for some days you had an edge on Ross, as he calls himself. So I'm glad you fetched the subject up—come on, what d' you know?"

Marsh again laughed his low and insinuating laugh.

"Have you tried to think of what Ross would look like without that mask of whiskers he wears—close cropped to his face in a mat of bristles?"

GRAFTON turned his eyes to the sky as if trying to make a mental image of what Ross would look like without his whiskers. He finally shook his head doubtfully.

"Can't make anything of *that*," he pronounced. "I've looked the old man over pretty close. And there's somethin' about his jib that looks familiar, and always has. I know he's been a runner for a chandler in Amoy, and that's what gits me—his funny ways that somehow don't belong to him. It ain't so much his ways, either, come to think of it—it's his *back* that gives me a start when he walks away from me up here on deck durin' the day."

"That's it," agreed Marsh. "He seems to be somebody else—isn't that it?"

"You've struck it. Nobody that I know, but somebody I *ought* to know. I've woke up in my sleep and said to myself, 'This Ross! Why he's . . .' and then I couldn't say the word—the name. Funniest thing that ever happened to me, mister."

"And you won't remember," said Marsh. "That's the value of the whole thing—nobody has remembered. But I *know*."

"Blast my eyes!" whispered the skipper, staring at him aghast.

"We'd better be careful."

"Oh, that's all right," assured Grafton. "Man at the wheel can't talk a word of English—won't have any idea what we're gammin' about. Just a mo'."

He went to the wheel again and squinted at the compass card, then stooped and peered down into the main cabin. Sure no one was lurking in the companion and listening, he returned to Marsh at the stern rail.

"Who is he?" he urged, putting a hand softly on Marsh's shoulder. "You can trust me, mister."

"If I was to tell you—I'd be putting money in your pocket—big money."

"Money in my pocket!" gasped Grafton. "Why, what's in it for—say, mister, you mean this man Ross is wanted by the police, and there's a reward on him?"

Marsh shook his head.

"All wrong, Cap'n. The police don't know anything about him."

"Then how's there money in it?"

Marsh ignored the question.

"Could you spend a couple of weeks' time with this schooner without anybody finding fault?"

"I own her, and I'm in ballast for S'pore. Why not—a couple of months or more, if there's money in it. But no wild-eyed gambles for me—it'd have to be a sure shot."

"It's so sure that I'll pay you any price in reason for a month—and I've got the cash below. But I want you in on it, Cap'n—not because I'm handing out fortunes just to be a good fellow, but because I'll need you."

"That sounds good to me, mister."

"Can we trust Israel Hutt?"

"Trust him how?"

"Trust him to come in on a good thing with you, and play through with it—fair, and share and share alike?"

Captain Grafton looked aft and blinked at the moon.

"That's a big order," he announced presently. "It'll all depend—he'll stick with me if I'm in, but I've got to know what it is before I'll say I'll take a hand. If I'm in, Hutt's in, you can lay to that."

"All right," said Marsh. "If you'll agree to split three ways on what we pick up."

"You've me word on *that*, but I don't want to be let in on any mare's nest. No *loco* talk, mister, and no smart games—all the cards in the deck on the board, that's my style."

"No mare's nest, Cap'n. I happen to know what I'm talking about. Now then, you said you'd have Nyata Island abeam at daylight in the morning, when you looked at the chart at supper."

"We will, if this wind holds, yes."

"Then there's a deep bay in the island just a mile or so below the wreck of the old steamer, *Sunda*. That's where I want you to put the *Tamil*."

"That's where you want to go—in that bay, as you call it? Why, man, that's a natural drydock—I'd have to kedge in through the slack water behind a strip of reef!"

"You can do it?" asked Marsh.

"Well, I *could*, but there are a couple of planters on Nyata, couple of young men named Ballard and Ogden. And they got a bungalow on a hill that'll show us up like——"

"We may get a morning fog that would cover us while we're kedging, eh?"

"Say, you know a lot about Nyata, mister. What is all this, anyhow? You say it's legal, but you want me to jam my schooner in between a couple of cliffs, and you talk about a month—and a mornin' fog to cover us goin' in."

"I guess a quarter of a million dollars would pay, eh, Skipper? Oh, I know Nyata—I've looked the ground over pretty well."

"A quarter of a million!" whispered Grafton incredulously. "Say, mister, don't try to take me in, there ain't no treasure on Nyata—pearls nor nothin' like that so——"

"Oh, I know what I'm doing, and I've got it all figured out—listen!"

And Marsh leaned forward and put his lips close to Grafton's ear. He spoke a few words in the lowest possible tone.

Captain Grafton staggered back over the deck with the roll of the schooner, and came up sharply against the weather rail. He was like a man who had been struck in the face with a club.

"Lord a'mighty!" he blubbered. "That's who he is—this Ross! No wonder I couldn't remember, knowin' he was dead all the time! So that's the way the cat jumped—and nobody the wiser! Of all the slick games! Sure! You're right! That's why I knowed his *back!*"

"And you'll want your third of the pickings, I take it," suggested Marsh triumphantly, but still with the caution which the business required.

"You bet you take it right," breathed Grafton, still backed up against the rail, his hands swinging limply at his sides. "I'm in, mister, and Hutt's in with both feet, never fear."

"It'll be wise to change the name of the schooner," went on Marsh with calm practicability. "Then even if the two planters come to see us, we'll give 'em some yarn that'll satisfy 'em. Matter of fact, I've got a collection of jungle bugs in my luggage, so you can say I've hired you to tie up in there while I study bugs. Simple enough. They don't need to know what's going on, and it'll be no time before we're ready to skip—if you take the proper measures to make Ross tell what he knows."

"Leave that to me and Hutt," assured Grafton. We'll make him talk—everything."

"He—he may die—accidental—after we've cleaned up," suggested Marsh, his voice low and purring.

"Lots of people die down in these islands," replied Grafton. His voice was as hard as a steel stay.

"Then I think we understand each other," said Marsh with satisfaction.

"A quarter of a million—in gold!" marveled Grafton, speaking more to himself than to Marsh, and winking at the moon.

His words fairly dripped with the greed that was in his soul, and his hands began to open and shut as if seeking something on which they could fasten.

"Understand each other," he repeated. "I guess so, mister. You don't think I'd let *that* old man below stand athwart me and a stack of gold like that, eh?"

"I figured you'd see it that way, Skipper. But we've got to make sure of one thing—that Ross doesn't happen to die of fever, or anything, until he's talked."

"We'll look after his health, neat and proper—until he's talked."

And he turned and blinked happily into the red moon.

BLUE clad, with silken trousers wrapped tightly about his ankles, Dang Chee mounted the stoop of the bungalow, carrying in his thin yellow hand a cluster of drinking coconuts.

The bland eyes of the Chinese took in the table on the veranda with its food and dishes still in a litter, drawing flies. But his face revealed no annoyance.

Mentally, Dang Chee kicked the third houseboy three times and gave him two hours' extra work during the evening—the particular two hours when the cockpit would be going full blast in the native settlement of Nyata Island.

The three kicks would mean little to the third houseboy, nor would the extra work, but that particular two hours while the cockpit would be open, meant torture of the highest degree. For the third houseboy had a new fighting cock, and had him matched for a battle that very evening, with two months' wages on the outcome.

Dang Chee, like all his race, knew the refinements of punishment; also, he knew it would be the last time for a long period before he would find the tiffin gear on the veranda an hour after tiffin.

The veranda was deserted, except for the pet monkey and the white-crested cockatoo of the lords of Nyata—Ballard and Ogden. Like all white men they were more or less crazy, but Dang Chee liked them in spite of their queer ways. Otherwise he would not have been Number One Boy and butler-in-chief at the bungalow of the young planters of Nyata. A veteran steamer steward, he knew his business, and was as much a diplomat as a butler.

He stood for a moment and stared at the table, calm and unruffled. No one, even his white masters, could have divined from his face the fact that he had five minutes before seen something of vast importance, and a blind menace which was yet to reveal itself and the quality of its hidden dangers.

It was a simple thing that Dang Chee had spied through the jungle top that covered the top of a ridge half a mile from the bungalow, so simple a thing that the menace of it bit to the very marrow of Dang Chee's spine.

As he stood there like a yellow idol, the half dozen young coconuts drooping from the rattan loops of the sling near his felt shoes, Ballard came out on the veranda. He was not thirty, and his browned face was lean and keen, looking all the browner for the white shirt and the big pipe-clayed sun helmet on his head, the white drill trousers neatly pressed, and the pipe-clayed shoes.

His smiling blue eyes met the little black beads of eyes of the Chinese, yet read nothing out of the ordinary behind them.

"Come on, Dang, open up the drinks! I've smoked my tongue into a dried bit of leather with those confounded Borneo cigarets we bought off that last trading schooner. Spike the nuts, you precious piece of animated jade!"

Of course, Dang Chee was totally unaware of the meaning of the last of Ballard's order. Ballard was like that; always joking the butler with some fancy English which might as well have been ancient Greek for all the Number One Boy knew.

Dang let his eyes wander back to the table, and he frowned a tiny frown across the top of his nose. He made a little flutter of disgust through his thin lips, and turned back to Ballard.

The planter was sitting on the top of the veranda rail, pulling the ears of Sango, the monkey. The cockatoo grumbled in jealousy and walked sidewise back and forth on the rail at a safe distance, swearing under his breath because the monkey got so much attention.

"Master, you got plenty gun?"

Dang Chee's voice was soft and low like the purling of backwash through a coral hole in a reef—a voice of feathery quality, soothing and altogether out of key for a question having to do with firearms—on an island where firearms were a most important subject.

Ballard stopped stroking Sango's ear. Something flashed through the mind of the young planter, as if his brain had picked up a hidden vibration in the words of the Chinese that told more than the mere words themselves. And Ballard knew the Chinese well enough to realize that a conversation out of Dang Chee's line of duty required a mental alertness of no mean quality.

"What you mean by talk of gun?" Ballard stood up, and his long legs moved slowly across the veranda in the direction of the Chinese.

Dang Chee remained standing by the table, facing his master, with a face blandly impassive, his head slightly bowed. He let the coconuts drop to the matting.

Ballard wanted to avoid raising his voice to talk across the veranda. Ogden was napping in the big living-room just inside the lowered sun-*kajangs*.

Also, Ballard suspected at once that Dang Chee had valuable and secret information about some of the islanders. The planters were most suspicious of some of the unruly element among their natives, and being the only white men on the island, were observing conditions with careful eyes.

"Master, you no got gun your side," said Dang Chee, his eyes roving to Ballard's belt.

"You think more better I have gun?" asked Ballard.

Dang Chee took off his bamboo conical hat, big as an umbrella, and laid it aside on the clean matting of the veranda flooring. He bent his head forward low so that he showed the crown with its "rug" of carefully wrapped queue. With a twitch of his fingers at the back of his neck, he let the queue fall, so as to be able to speak respectfully to his lord. This done, the Chinese drew his hands into the long loose sleeves of his blouse, muff-wise, and bowed formally.

Ballard nodded at these signs of respect; then, his eyes wandered over the sunlit sea that lay before him below the headlands. There was a promise of rain in the low lying clouds at the western horizon, for it was approaching the time for the shift of the monsoons.

"Maybe pretty soon my boss-*tuan* fight plenty bimeby." The words came sibilantly without the slightest trace of a movement of the thin yellow lips.

"Ah!" thought Ballard. "It *is* the natives. And smooth old Dang is slipping the news across to me as quietly as possible to get ready for trouble."

"Maybe other feller-man he get more fight he buy," said Ballard aloud. "I think I know what's going on, Dang Chee—I've eyes and ears. But thank you for tipping me off just the same."

"I not know this talk—no savvy this pidgin. My master Ballard-man not know what this side." He nodded in the direction of the distant ridge.

"So they're plotting in the jungle, eh?" said Ballard, following the glance of the Chinese.

Stepping to one of the out-swung *kajangs*, Ballard lifted a belt and a pair of automatic pistols from a hidden hook. He belted them on, slipped a pistol to the front and slapped it playfully.

"There you are, old boy! Happier now?"

"You not know," persisted Dang Chee in that same lifeless monotone.

"Guessed wrong, eh! Hello, what *is* up, that's got you so excited, you old statue of oriental wisdom? Come on, Dang, tell me about it, and we'll see how much I do know," urged Ballard.

The planter's eyes roamed out over the headlands where they jutted into the blue water, drenched in sunlight. The sky was bright blue, except for the streak of low lying clouds, the sea cobalt except here and there where the sun glinted over the furrows of the swells and made streaks of dazzling brilliance along their flanks.

"What time now, master?" asked Dang Chee.

Ballard grinned.

"Old Dang is going to make the most of his news, whatever it is," he thought.

The planter glanced at his wrist watch.

"A little piece after two," he reported. "But don't stir yourself up into a frenzy, Dang—take all the time there's in my clock to tell the news."

Dang Chee remained silent and immovable, like a jade statue. He seemed to be thinking, but he might have been merely resting his brain.

Off on both sides along the beach Ballard watched the fuzzy tops of the palms which straggled along the bleached shores of sand. Through the rim of the trees he could make out the white ruffle of surf for miles back to the eastward. There were no reefs in that direction to break the sullen surf that beat against Nyāta.

To the westward there was a band of wet shingle showing black between the whiteness of the dry sand and the ivory of the breaking rollers. At one spot, where the old wreck lay on the reef, there was dead water. Nyata was a peaceful place that day, and Ballard had a feeling of regret that again he and Ogden would have to do battle to see who should rule. The longer it took Dang Chee to tell his story, the more menacing would be the news.

"All day, something happen this side you not know, master," Dang Chee began to drone again like a schoolboy reciting a lesson well learned. "Maybe you know, now you be fight—somebody be all finish come this time in your clock—plenty be finish dead."

At that moment, Ogden, roused by the conversation on the veranda, appeared in the doorway. In contrast with the tall and slender Ballard, Ogden was short and thickset, and instead of lean-faced, was square-jawed. But no matter what was in the wind, he had a grin.

"What's all the rookus?" he asked, brushing his eyes and yawning. The yawn turned into a grin that showed his white teeth. "I snoozed longer'n I wanted to, and now I've got to pole down to the settlement and see how the stripping work is goin' on."

"Better wait a few minutes," suggested Ballard. "There's something in the brainpan of Dang Chee, and I'm trying to get it out."

Ogden noted for the first time the serious mien of his partner. Then the sleepy man turned and looked at Dang Chee, and was awake in an instant.

"Hello, Dang! Troubles, eh? Been losin' with the dice cups down in the settlement-side? Hard luck again, huh? You don't burn enough punk sticks front-side your joss."

"Not gambling troubles this time," explained Ballard. "He's as tight-lipped as a witness in a dope-smuggling trial. See what you can pry loose from him. He says something's happened that'll make us wear our guns. Strapped mine on just to please him."

Ogden's black eyes fastened on the automatic pushed forward on Ballard's belt. The younger man sobered, and his eyes narrowed as he turned to Dang Chee with a quick, questioning look.

Ogden was not more than twenty-five, and had a boyishness in his ways that made him seem younger. He was a driver at work, but he smiled as he drove. Though equal partners in the plantation, Ogden always deferred to the judgment of Ballard in business matters.

As Ogden was a good executive and could get things done with the least possible effort and time, Ballard gave him a free hand in handling the natives. And Ogden understood the native ways. The pair made an ideal combination for island planting, where the plantation owners have to administer affairs without the assistance of police or other outside governmental aid.

Dang Chee bowed as Ogden turned to him.

"More better you go look see," remarked the Chinese.

"Come on, Dang, give us the low down," urged Howe. "No poker-talk! Shift gears and step on it!"

Dang Chee waved a thin and yellow hand out in the direction of the high ground before the bungalow.

"You go this side—more better you look over far-off bush—you catch boat come this side, nobody see him."

He pointed at the distant ridges, and then with a bow, picked up his cluster of coconuts and pattered away to the side veranda on his way to the cook house in search of the third houseboy.

THE two young planters looked at each other in puzzled wonder.

"Now what the Sam Hill has the old chink ostrich picked up with his shoe button eyes?" asked Ogden.

They turned and looked out over the jungled crests to the westward. But they appeared no different than was usual; just a horizon of jungly brush that undulated along the sky-line and fell in a sharp line to the sea at the headlands.

"That old bird is seein' things, and right in the middle of the day," went on Ogden. "Has he been hittin' the pipe? Maybe there's dope being smuggled in again. 'You catch boat' he says. Where could a boat be but over in Cañon Bay behind the first

ridge? And if there was a boat in there we couldn't see it, and neither could Chang, so he's—" He checked his words, for the old Chinese had appeared in the doorway of the house.

"On top side, from place I go, this time come home, I see him," persisted Dang Chee.

He was as near to excitement now as a Chinese could get, and so talkative that the cockatoo took a toe out of his ear and twisted his head to look about for the competition.

"One piece—white color—run this way proper," went on Dang Chee earnestly, moving his hand in a horizontal gesture. "Me not know this pidgin talk, but masters savvy good."

There was a peculiar light in the eyes of the old Chinese.

"You know, I believe he's seen something that gives him the pip," said Ballard quietly. "He's all lit up—and afraid."

"You mean small boat little feller, or big boat to go China side?" demanded Ogden.

"Him big feller—you see this way proper," and again he pointed to the high ground out in front of the bungalow.

"Can he mean that he's seen the yard of a ship?" asked the puzzled Ballard.

"Oh, bosh!" said Ogden. "There's nothing in sight. All piffle—not a thing on sea or land—and he keeps pointing at the jungle.

"Let's mosey out and take a squint from the high ground," suggested Ballard. "That'll settle it. But we'll walk along and not make it appear that we're looking for anything in particular. Looks to me as if Dang wants to keep this news of his under cover, so you fetch the glasses, Jim, and we'll comb the ridges. I believe the old boy's gone balmy."

They left the veranda, Ogden carrying a pair of binoculars. They walked across the grassy clearing to the highest ground in front of the bungalow, a hill that lifted in a gentle mound and gave a view of the palm trees below on the beaches and the line of shore in both directions.

They went to a crude sun dial that Ogden had constructed in idle moments, and sat down. Ballard leaned forward on the pillar that held the dial, and pretending to be studying the figures, really trained the glasses on the distant ridge and began to search the crests that ran down to the sea.

Ogden studied the foreshore with his naked eyes, and the sea to westward. There was the longest line of reefs that ran out from this coast of Nyata. It was a couple of miles distant, and showed as a barrier of white spume against the blue of the sea where the breakers feathered on the coral.

"I can't find anything," said Ballard after a few minutes hunting along the jungled tops of the ridges.

Ogden's gaze rested idly on a round black object which stuck up midway of the long reef. It was the only thing to hold the eye over that heaving expanse of water. This was the iron hulk of the steamer *Sunda* which had gone on the reef some ten years earlier. The wreck had occurred at a time before the two planters had come to Nyata, when the natives were much wilder, which was one of the reasons Ballard and Ogden had bought their concession cheaply.

"You don't suppose he's just discovered the old wreck, after being with us four years?" asked Ogden.

"Oh, he's seen that before," said Ballard, busy with the glasses.

Everybody on Nyata knew about the *Sunda*. Captain Kenlon had lost his life in the wreck. Some said he had stuck to his ship too long after being abandoned by his native crew. The crew got away in boats and returned to loot the stranded vessel with the head-hunting natives of Nyata.

There had been all kinds of rumors for years after the wreck, as there always are in such cases. Now and then some of the *Sunda's* fittings cropped up in the huts of the natives—brasses from her bridge and engine-rooms, curtains from her cabins, brass keys of staterooms that had been hammered out to form some rude tool or ornament, lamps that lacked chimneys and were plainly ship's gimbal-lamps, medicine chests stocked with cotton bandages that were contrived into turbans.

It was natural enough in those waters that a wrecked ship should be stripped by natives. But she had been burned afterward, and she had been looted before she burned.

In the various investigations, there were hints that Captain Kenlon had been murdered by his native crew before the *Sunda* was put on the reef, and that the crew were in a plot with the Nyatans to have her beached there for the purpose of looting her.

The underwriters had sent men to Nyata since the coming of Ballard and Ogden. There seemed to be an effort to try and fix the blame for the killing of Captain Kenlon, and many of the plantation workers were questioned at length as to what had happened when the *Sunda* piled up on the reef.

There was still a standing reward for information about the death of the master, but none of the natives ever claimed it. Still, the whispers went on, and the wise old natives winked and hinted, but kept their mouths shut.

So the rusting old hulk was a constant reminder to the two planters that there were still natives on Nyata who would be quick enough to seize any opportunity to kill white men if there happened to be loot—and any chance of escaping punishment. So when they were inclined to be over trustful of their natives, Ballard and Ogden remembered what had happened to Captain Kenlon of the *Sunda*—his native crew had made an end of him.

"I guess maybe you're right, Jim, about old Dang Chee seeing things in the middle of the day," said Ballard, as he put aside the glasses. "There's nothing to be seen along the ridges that hasn't been there since Noah was an oakum-boy in the navy yard."

"Oh, the old geezer just wanted a little excitement, seeing he's probably out of hop and probably has lost all his money so he can't hit the gambling game at the settlement."

Ogden got to his feet and started back for the bungalow.

"I suppose he saw some of the natives running around on the slopes, hunting for *dammar*," said Ballard, and followed Ogden.

It was then that Ogden stopped dead in his tracks and muttered something in surprize. His eyes were on the nearest ridge that ran athwart the island—the very direction where Ballard had been searching with his glasses.

"Come here!" urged Ogden. "Come stand as near to me as you can, but don't show you're in any hurry."

Ballard moved toward his partner.

"There is something white showing over the ridge! No, not over the top of it, but through a little gap in the brush. Pick up that yellow-green spot—that's where some moisture seeps through the rocks and makes the brush grow fresher."

Ballard, standing by his side, scanned the spot without using the glasses.

"To the left of that green spot," went on Ogden without pointing. "See that little streak of white, lying flat? That's what Dang Chee ran his hand crosswise for—to tip us off that it lay horizontally."

"By George, you're right!" said Ballard. "I've got it!"

He stepped behind Ogden, and while the other looked off to seaward and held out a hand as if he were calling attention to something on the water, Ballard put his glasses across Ogden's shoulder.

"What is it?" asked Ogden presently.

"And Dang Chee was right, too," said Ballard. "Know what it is—well, a boat!"

"Boat! How do you mean, boat?"

"That white spot showing through the green opening is the crosstrees of a schooner!"

Ogden whistled softly.

"A schooner! Then she's hidden in behind the ridge—and lying in Cañon Bay!"

IN the main cabin of the schooner, a man lay on his back on a transom seat and stared up through the open skylight. His feet were bound with heaving line and his hands were secured across his bare chest with a cord knotted about his wrists. The ends of the cords were bound about his waist. He had the tidy aspect of a person dead and prepared for burial.

The sunlight from the top of the cabin struck across him. He was an oldish man. A short black beard, tinged at the ends with white, covered his face—as much of it as could be seen, for there was a red bandage tied tightly across his jaws so that it covered his mouth.

He breathed as if having difficulty in getting air into his lungs. His frame shook with irregular pantings, as if he had not yet recovered from tremendous physical efforts.

The cabin, as well as the man, revealed every sign of a terrific struggle. His rumpled hair was damp and his forehead oozed heavy perspiration. His white trousers were soiled with reddish stains, which at first glance might be taken for blood. On closer examination they proved to be rust stains, as if he had been thrown in among old chains.

One white shoe was at the end of the transom. The other shoe was on a foot, with the strings hanging loosely. He had not been able to tie the strings while

dressing. His shirt was ripped open in front and pulled up from under his belt.

The schooner had no sea motion on her. She lay as still as if she were anchored in a tidal basin or moored in a dock, except that she lifted slightly to a regular wash.

The man staring up through the skylight was only made aware of this motion by the rise and fall of green foliage against the coaming of the skylight. Trees seemed to hang over the vessel—jungly trees and the downward shoots of a few mangroves. Here and there the frond of a nipa palm brushed the rigging.

From the deck outside the bound man could hear the pattering of bare feet, the low orders of a *serang*, hustling a native crew, and the rustling sound that was partly on deck and partly seemed to come from somewhere outside the vessel—probably from the jungle ashore. Several men seemed to be cutting bushes and thrashing about in the dense growths into which the schooner had been driven.

From the quarterdeck above there came the low murmur of voices—gruff, but cautious, with an occasional spattering of Malay words to the *serang*, with curt directions to the sailors who were working at the stern and in the jungle.

Above the rustling of leaves and the hacking of branches there came the grating sound of lashings being drawn taut over rails and in the ratlines of the rigging. The shrouds shook in irregular agitation.

Of a sudden, shod feet pounded down the steps of the companionway. The man on the transom seat twisted his neck to get a view of the person coming from the quarterdeck.

It was Captain Grafton who appeared. The pajamas he had worn on watch the night before were replaced by his working clothes. He was a peculiar combination of unkemptness and stern authority.

His shirt, open at the heavy neck, was torn across one shoulder. There was a blood-red bruise running aslant from the outer edge of his left eye up to his forehead, where it disappeared in his light hair.

The hair was parted at the end of this bruise and pasted down with some greasy substance, showing that the injury had been treated to prevent the flow of blood from the cut scalp.

His lower lip was swollen and cut, giving his mouth a downward and surly slant which was altogether foreign to the skipper's natural expression.

For Captain Grafton was strangely unruffled in spite of his marks of conflict. Only one thing about him revealed a willingness to fight—a pair of automatics slapping against his thighs in front as he walked.

The weapons sagged the belt, and lay in open-topped holsters at an angle that bespoke a high degree of efficiency, just as a pistol always seems to take on the character of its owner by the way it is worn.

The leather of the holsters shone like polished metal—there was nothing new or untried about them; instead they fairly oozed speed and accuracy as an intangible and spiritual quality in their makeup, just as they shed marks of brown leather polish on the whiteness of Captain Grafton's trousers. They had that quality which comes to tools used frequently and by skillful hands.

Grafton was a young man, heavy of build yet not ponderous or slow moving. His movements seemed slow, due to the fact that there was no lost motion in any of his movements. When he reached for a thing, he picked it up, when he picked it up, he used it, and when he was finished with it, he promptly discarded it. He had that certain unknown thing which some men possess without being able to tell how they acquired it—decision even in trifles which accomplishes work without appearing to make any special effort.

His big round face, weatherbeaten and dulled in color rather than burned by tropical light, was now drenched with drops of sweat that stood out on the skin like spray that has blown on so hard that it sticks.

But he showed no signs of discomfort, either from wounds or heat. If the belt with his murderous weapons had been changed for an apron, Grafton would have passed anywhere for a small grocer.

The man had a placidity that was incongruous, and his very stolidity in his present environment was somehow ludicrous—until it was observed that his very physical commonplaceness also reeked with a quiet, but none the less palpable danger for any person who might attempt to thwart his purposes or might be at his mercy.

In his grayish eyes there was also a disarming mildness. They apparently saw nothing out of the ordinary in the figure of a man bound and gagged in the schooner's

cabin. For Captain Grafton surveyed the man calmly with something of a bored expression.

He stood for a moment, short legs wide apart, and stared. Then he turned his head aside and wiped his face with the loose corner of his torn shirt, moved over to the littered cabin table to pick up a short pipe. From a tin box he fingered some loose tobacco into the bowl, sat down on a stool where he could face the bound man, and lighted the pipe with lazy deliberation.

"Put up a fairly good fight for an old 'un," remarked the captain, in a rasping voice that suggested a coffee-grinder. "Must ha' been ready for trouble as we drew on for Nyata."

So free from rancor were his words that he might have been saying to a housewife at a grocer's—

"Your peck of spinach is ready, ma'am."

The old man tossed his head from side to side and mumbled something under the folds of the bandage. He turned his eyes on Grafton, and glared through the shaft of sunshine through the skylight.

"You was lookin' for fight, and you got it," went on Captain Grafton. "And slept with your shoes on, to be ready for a row, in consequence spoiled the paintwork at the foot of your bunk—new paintwork, too."

The old man on the transom squirmed about in an effort to get the gag free from his mouth.

"You might as well save your strength," commented Grafton as he watched. "It's hot down here—and it'll be hotter as the day wears along. You're goin' to need all the life in your skin for what you've got to do—and you'll have plenty chance to *talk*."

The old man groaned in exasperation at his helplessness.

Captain Grafton's pipe failed him, and he struck a match on the under side of the table, puffed briskly, and continued to squint through the smoke at the prisoner. There was a clatter of pans from the galley forward that made him turn his head slightly to listen.

"You got a lot to tell," he resumed in the same cold and rasping voice. "But it won't take long—and then we'll have a walk about on this island. Not far, maybe, but you know the way. Know it good. I guess you got a fair idea of what I'm drivin' at, eh, Mr. Ross?" He gave the name with significant precision, and with a trace of jeer.

There was a new sound at the top of the scuttle. A pair of feet in low cloth shoes appeared on the upper steps of the companionway. The ankles were bare, and over them were the turned-up bottoms of a pair of washed out dungaree trousers.

The feet descended, revealing a thin-faced man, younger than the captain, tall and angular and loose-jointed.

"Looks nice, don't he, Hutt?" asked the skipper.

Israel Hutt, mate of the *Tamil*, grinned, showing four upper teeth to be missing in front. The gap made the teeth at the sides appear as fangs.

The mate's eyes were watery pale, showing much of the whites on the under sides. They had that peculiar instability which is found in the eyes of men who have gazed at heaving seas over long periods—they wavered even when he looked straight ahead, with the quivering motion of a compass-card which responds to the movement of a ship's head with sluggish hesitancy.

"He'll keep—for a while," remarked Hutt.

The sleeves of his gingham shirt were rolled to the elbows, revealing the bluish markings of tattooed figures poorly executed on the skin of his brown forearms. His nose was long and drooped to a thin point which hooked over, so to speak, a scraggly reddish mustache. His white canvas hat, with upturned brim all round, was slightly askew on his head, and was held in place by one of his ample and outthrust ears.

"Where's Marsh?" asked Captain Grafton.

Hutt showed his fangs.

"Under hatches. Didn't put up any fight at all—so *he's* out the way."

Grafton gave a grunt of approval, still with his elbows on the table, nursing his pipe between both hands, and smoking with reflective satisfaction.

"I'll have a look round on deck," said Grafton, and rising, he followed Hutt up the companionway to the quarterdeck.

ON deck, Captain Grafton and Israel Hutt stood in a rounding bower of greenery. All along the taffrail brush had been lashed upright, close together, so that the tops stood at least six

feet above the planking of the quarterdeck.

And the freshly-cut butts sticking up along the line of the rail showed that some of the brush had been lashed with its tops down so as to conceal the stern of the vessel from seaward. Through the foliage they could see the reef outside with its line of spume, and beyond the shining sea.

Brown sailors were aloft, lashing bushes to the shrouds and topmasts; others were cutting brush from the edge of the jungle and passing it over the bulwarks on the shore side; on the outer side, where the slopes of another ridge ran down to the water not more than fifty feet away, the bulwarks were being dressed with upright bushes in the same fashion that the quarterdeck was protected from observation.

"They got enough brush aboard and alongside now to bury her," remarked Hutt, as he surveyed the scene forward.

"Can't have too much," said Grafton. "And we want the cabin trunk covered—it's from seaward comes the danger. Some coast guard cutter or trader might get a slant on us and come nosin' in to see what's up before we're finished with this job o' work below, and the fat's in our fire."

"Ain't much of anythin' in these waters this time of year," soothed Hutt. "Round t'other side, yes—some traders take that course in the new monsoon, but——"

"Can't take any chance," broke in Grafton. "Don't know what kind of a fight he'll put up when he knows what we know. And we can't be in a rush—no good to kill him till we've got what we want out o' him."

"No, can't kill him too soon," agreed Hutt.

"May have to let down the topmasts," said Grafton with a squint aloft. "Wouldn't be surprized if our trucks couldn't be picked up from the planter's house."

"I been aloft. Can't see a thing over the tops of the bushes on that ridge, and if we can't see them, they can't see us—that's turkey 'nough."

"Think the brush on the ridge is higher'n our trucks?"

"Yes, *sir!* And see the *serang?* He's wrappin' the masts with vines. It's the crosstrees I've told him to cover special—bein' white, they're dangerous."

"Well, what if them young whippersnappers of planters *do* see us?" asked Grafton. "What can they do if they ain't got any government officers round. We don't need much time, and I guess a little lead'll show 'em their place."

"Sure, we can haul out when we're done," said Hutt. "Don't think we'll let any kid planters tell us where we git off, not with this deal."

"We'll have what we want before supper, or I'm a Turk," said Grafton.

"Maybe we made a mistake, Skipper, not to go to the bay round at the settlement, and anchor there, straight and open, and run this show from that side—in the night."

"Maybe," agreed Grafton. "But Ross has been figuring on dates for a couple of days back, and it looks to me like he's expectin' some vessel to come in for him—that's what Marsh thought. So in case we lay in the settlement, we might run into trouble at just the minute we didn't want to find it, and be recognized, even if we didn't have to stay in the bay. No, we got to get clear without anybody knowin' we was in here—or what for."

"But the planters—if they see us? Anyhow, they'll know what we look like."

Grafton gave serious thought to that angle of the problem.

"Well, with the planters, it'll be wise not to pretend we care who sees us. With the name plates of the schooner shifted, they won't have much to go on. And if they find out what our names are—good so far—but we'll have to plug 'em with lead before we haul away. The game is to make our Mr. Ross talk, and make the planters shut up for keeps."

"You got a lot of sense to talk that way," declared Hutt, in open admiration. "But we ought to make him give up what he knows *pronto*. Every minute puts time on our side, as I see it."

"He'll talk when I'm ready, Hutt. Do him good to lay and worry below for a time. First, I want to make sure the brush is all in place on sides and riggin', and then we got to secure the crew below. Can't take any chance that these natives'd git gallied from what goes on and skip into the jungle.

"That'd mean they'd show up in the settlement or mix in with the natives of these planters, and spill our beans proper. Then how'd we git out of here with no crew? Don't take much time to put the brush on, and we can clear it quicker'n it takes to lash it up if we got the men."

"Oh, sure, we got to have the last one of 'em below and secure, before we start things

with *him*. Anyhow, we're snug as a bug in a rug here, unless on some off chance some natives from that settlement poles around in the brush and walks right into us."

"Let 'em pole," said Grafton. "No need for us to chew the fat over that yet."

"But we got to know what we'll do, come any mischance on things," persisted Hutt. "And we can't be sure how much the *serang* knows a'ready. He's a smart snake, that boy. Besides, the whole crew knows somethin's goin' on that ain't accordin' to Hoyle with all this brush work."

"They think it's to hunt bugs—Marsh told 'em all about that."

"So he did. But Marsh don't know this crew like I do. They don't suspect things—just smell things out—and know. The cook's been on the look, too. And he's gabbed some with the *serang*. We got some watchin' to do on our own account, Cap'n."

"Think the crew'll act up on us if they find they're to be put below when this is all done?"

"I'll act their backbones for 'em," declared Hutt. "When I've stretched a couple, they'll be good dogs. It's the Nyata natives I'm worried about—you know, they'll smell a rat that we're in here. From what Marsh said, they're bad actors when they feel like it, and they feel that way most of the time."

"Just keep your shirt on—and wear your guns. Anybody that plays smart, plug 'em for keeps. I don't aim to be in here overlong. We'll be out with dark, and the job done."

"That's the ticket, Cap'n!"

"Go below and git out the ship's irons. Lay 'em on the table where he can see 'em. That'll make him do a little thinkin'. If we wear him down some that way, it'll take out any fight he's got left in his system. He knows now what we want, but show him we're ready to make him hand us the information, and no foolin' about it."

Israel Hutt dropped below, and left Captain Grafton to keep watch on the work of the crew.

"YOU said it!" replied Ballard. "A schooner in behind the ridge—in Cañon Bay."

The two young planters turned and looked at each other in amazement. Ballard handed over the glasses.

Ogden took one look at the white spot, whistled through his teeth softly, and led the way back to the bungalow.

"Crookedness in *that!*" declared Ogden. "We're in for something now, or I miss my guess on that business."

"Nothin' but crookedness," agreed Ballard. "Any schooner that would be on the straight, wouldn't be hiding in the wildest part of our shoreline."

"Oh, it's an under cover game right enough. Lucky thing the chink picked up that marker—it might be there for weeks and we not know it."

"How did she come to get in there at all without our knowing it?" questioned Ballard, a pucker of worry between his eyes.

"Must have gone in before daylight, and used kedge anchors or a line on nipa palms to warp in."

"Daylight! You mean this morning? How do we know she hasn't been there a week or more already?"

Ogden nodded.

"Maybe. But there was a heavy mist on the sea this morning, which made me think of her not being there longer than that. And I've seen not a hair of mist for weeks. You know how that low fog works off them little bays over there—I've seen Cañon Bay when it looked as if it was full of drifting cotton wool."

"Then," said Ballard, "she sneaked up the coast and timed her arrival before daylight, trusting to luck for that fog to hide her while she tucked herself away."

"Sure, and that would mean she knew pretty well where she was going and was no stranger. Every Dick and Jack can't know about the land fog that drops from the jungle out of Cañon Bay."

"That's a good point," admitted Ballard. "But what do you make of it, now that you've reasoned it out so far?"

"Some of our bad natives may have met that schooner and either helped to tow her in, or tailed on shorelines and dragged her in."

"You think it's gun running, Jim?"

"That as well as anything else," replied Ogden. "We got to start somewhere on doping it out. That schooner gang may have come here to clean us out, and let in some other crowd of whites to take over our buildings and collect on the work we've done on our plantations. The best way to play that little game would be to pick up

with the bad element among our natives, and turn 'em on us."

"It's all possible enough from that side of the fence," assented Ballard. "But it may be somebody running opium in for the chinks of the settlement."

Ogden chuckled with mirth. "Tom Ballard, you'll never pick up the ways of the chink. I've drilled at you, and I had an idea you'd learned pretty well, but you're hopeless."

"Let me in on the answer, Jim."

"If it was opium for the settlement chinks, you'd never get the tip-off through old Dang Chee, you can lay your bet on that! Oh, no! Dang's not turned informer on the dope runners yet! He likes his dream-stuff too well. And if it was opium, that schooner could sail into the bay and anchor off the jetty and get plenty of help to get her dope ashore, buy a small cargo from us, and nobody be the wiser that opium was under her hatches when she put in. Or she could run the stuff ashore with a small boat, without taking the trouble to warp into Cañon Bay. No, Tom, she's in there for a stay—and that means serious business—for us."

"No, I suppose it isn't opium. And it does look bad."

"I'll say it does look bad—for us. You know that if she breaks the law in that bay, and gets caught at it by the coast guard now or later, we may lose our concession here, and *puff* goes the capital we've sunk, the labor we've put in, and the trading arrangements and bank loans and so on.

"If we're not held responsible for what goes on in that schooner, we'll be under suspicion of being in on the deal in some crooked way—winking at it, and then trying to say we knew nothing about it."

Ballard turned and looked back to seaward as if expecting to raise a sail or the smoke smudge of a cutter. He thought there was going to be serious trouble, and he was not worried on that score, but he'd rather turn the business over to the proper authorities, and not involve the property rights concerned in Nyata if the schooner should escape after landing smuggled goods.

"Leave it to a chinkie to meet a smooth game with smoothness," went on Ogden. "If one of the Malay boys had sighted those crosstrees he'd have rushed the whole house out to have a look and there'd have been a grand hullabaloo—then the gang aboard that schooner'd been tipped off that they were spotted."

Ballard resumed his walk toward the house with slow steps.

"How do you feel about our natives in this thing?" he asked. "Think there's a chance they're in on it—beyond just a wide suspicion on your part?"

"Yes, it may be we've got a native uprising on our hands," said Ogden. "That *sa'puak* of Tabuan's has been smart and swanky lately. I haven't said much to you about it, because I didn't want to worry you with such stuff, but I've had my ears up for several weeks."

"What's it all about this time?"

"Old Tabuan, 'The Wasp,' is beginning to think he ought to be raja of Nyata. He's been as mean as his name for some time. His little crowd of swanking loafers who'd like to be chiefs under him if he got to be raja, have been more than cocky."

"Has he any sympathy with the working crowd?"

"I'm pretty sure Tabuan's stirring things up with our workers. I've kept quiet on the thing, as I say, so as not to fret you while you've been planning out that scheme for bringing new stripping machinery for the hemp, but now I begin to understand there's something stirring that's maybe bigger than I looked for—and this hidden schooner is part of it."

"I'd rather it'd be the natives than some strangers up to mysterious business, and illegal," said Ballard. "We can handle the natives."

"Don't be too sure," cautioned Ogden. "If they've got a gang of whites in a schooner to back 'em up, that means arms and white men to help 'em in their plots."

"You're right *there*," conceded the other. "If this schooner has to hide, the gang on it can't afford to let us look 'em over. Just the same we've got to look into the matter without delay, and when the schooner crowd finds we're on, there's bound to be trouble."

"And we've got to be able to show a claw, too," said Ogden, his jaw hardening.

"We've got to be ready for a fight, yes. And if they get the drop on us, we'll be wiped out. Once the show starts, it'll be a finish fight."

"Then we'd better get into some old dark clothes for jungle work, take our automatics and plenty of ammunition, and get

over on the far side of that ridge for a little scouting while the day is young enough to give us light and good time to get back before dark. It looks like a busy night ahead."

They mounted a side stoop of the bungalow and went to their rooms at once to get ready for action.

WHEN Ballard and Ogden, dressed in old khaki and their automatics concealed under their jackets, met in the living-room of the bungalow, old Dang Chee was superintending the final work of clearing the veranda table. A saddened third houseboy was performing the duty with more speed than he had shown for a couple of years.

"What do you think of staying here while I scout that schooner?" asked Ballard.

Ogden shook his head and the old navy watch cap he wore, a most suitable headgear for close work in the jungle.

"We'd better make the trip together, don't know what we'll run into."

"But the bungalow—some of the schooner's men may work round and take it while we're gone. It's a safe bet that we're being watched."

"We can trust Dang Chee with the house. And we can send one of the houseboys to the settlement and bring up some watchers to keep the trails to the house under observation. I trust Dang Chee down to the ground, but you never know how a chinkie's mind works. He may not want to let the houseboys in on the fact that he tipped us off about that schooner.

"At the same time, if our own natives are in on this thing, Dang Chee would be finished off proper if they found he'd spoiled their game. The first thing we've got to find out is whether Tabuan's gang is in cahoots with the schooner."

"Then don't send any word to the settlement. Let the house boys think we've started for the settlement, and let Dang Chee guess what he wants to. We'll keep our guns under cover and drift up the trail as if we were on the way to the settlement, and then slip away on that trail that'll take us to the ridge. Our change of togs will be explained by the look of rain."

Ogden nodded assent to the plan, and they left the house by the rear, walking slowly, and talking quietly.

They beckoned Dang Chee from the cook house, and warned him not to leave the bungalow; also, to see that none of the servants left for the settlement on errands or any other excuse. The wise old Chinese bowed gravely as he got his orders, and Ballard detected a knowing look in the Number One Boy's eyes as he blandly replied—

"Me savvy this pidgin, *tuan*."

When they were out of sight of the bungalow the two planters swung off the settlement trail to the left and got into a narrow path that led to low ground through heavy jungle.

The shallow valley between ridge and house had to be crossed before they would reach the first slope at the foot of the ridge, where it leveled away inland. Not until they had gained the crest of the ridge, or were well down on its farther slope, could they hope to catch sight of the schooner.

In half an hour, by the winding path, they had gained the top of the ridge. But they were far away from the sea, and the ridge was thick here with dense growth. On the reverse slope they worked down diagonally, gaining in the direction of the sea as they descended. The lower they went the heavier was the brush.

Finally they struck the steep side which ran straight down to the tidal water of Cañon Bay. That forced them to higher ground, and they had to move along the flank of the ridge over the thinnest of trails, a trail long unused and thick with pendant leaves and vines that had to be pushed aside or crawled through.

Now they had to proceed with great caution and avoid rustling the bushes. And they knew it was possible there were men roaming ashore from the schooner in search of springs or wild fruit. The foragers would use the trail if they ran into it, and Ballard and Ogden had to take care not to blunder into an ambush.

They stopped every few minutes to listen. They were well protected from the sun, the path being actually gloomy on account of its heavy foliage overhead. But it was hot work, for the day was sultry and the turn of the monsoon overdue, so the air was laden with moisture. And no air stirred in the depths of the jungle, which steamed moistly.

They hid their jackets under the ruin of an old hut which had been used for shelter by natives hunting *dammar*. There they abandoned the trail and wormed themselves into the thick jungle on the lower side. Ogden

judged that they were now about abreast of where the schooner must lie, judging from the position of the crosstrees they had spied.

It was slow work to gain twenty feet without making a dangerous noise in the brush. They crawled on the moist red earth, searching through the leaves with their eyes, having as a spotty background below, the bright water of the bay.

"Swing off to seaward a little more," urged Ogden in a whisper. "I can hear something working in the brush."

Ballard gained two lengths of his body in the direction suggested, and then threw his hand over his back in warning to Ogden, and lay still.

Ogden worked himself forward on hands and knees until he lay beside Ballard.

"Who is it?"

"There are bushes out near the water that seem to be moving gently up and down," whispered Ballard. "That's what you heard, probably."

He pointed a hand to give Ogden the line of sight.

"By George!" breathed Ogden. "I can see what you mean. The jungle seems to lift and fall there, as if a piece of it was floating on the water."

"They've got brush lashed to the rigging—that's what we see. It lifts a little with the tide wash!"

"Say! That's just what it is! And you know what it means."

"It means they're hidden for a good long stay," said Ballard. "Whatever it is they're up to, they don't intend to get out on short notice, and they don't want to be seen from sea or shore."

They listened. There was a gentle and lazy creaking at intervals. Then the aroma of tobacco came to their nostrils, sweet and pungent over the dank odors of rotting vegetation.

Ballard picked up a slight movement through the interstices of the creepers and leaves and the boles of trees—something that heaved regularly, but should have been a bit of solid ground. A vagrant breeze swung into the bay with a puff as it was pressed together between the cliff sides. With the tobacco fragrance came the reek of tidal mud and the gases of marsh ground that had been freshly disturbed.

"I'm ready for him," came a gruff voice, a coffee-grinder voice. "And fetch the irons with him."

Shod feet pounded across deck planks.

"There's at least one white man aboard her—and he spoke to another white man," whispered Ballard.

"If you'll push over that little hummock ahead we'll be able to get a better sight of the deck," advised Ogden.

They were within fifty feet of the hidden vessel when they heard that gruff voice. Ballard moved along, inch by inch, Ogden crawling in his wake.

When they had gained the hummock they could see part of the schooner's bow; also, a bit of her forward bulwark on the port side, and a glimpse of her bowsprit nosed into the bushes.

The vessel heaved gently, not making a rise of more than six inches as she lifted under the action of the tiny swells that had lost their force far up in the toe of the narrow bay, with floating seaweed and a litter of vines to break the wash.

Both men peered ino the stronger light where the brush-covered vessel lay, attempting to find her name on the round of her upper bow planks. But they could only see the top edge of faint white lettering that ran along the name plate. It was almost wholly masked by the bushes ashore.

Ogden finally lifted his shoulders high enough to get to his knees. Keeping his eyes fixed where the name should be, he watched intently. In time the schooner lifted higher than usual, and he had full sight of the lettering.

"She's the *Timor Laut*," he whispered.

"Sounds like a Singapore schooner," said Ballard. "That name's Malay, and only Straits vessels would have such a name, or maybe from Labuan or Borneo ports."

He sought through his memory for a schooner of that name.

"That name may be a blind, too, just like the bushes," reasoned Ogden.

"Maybe. We could tell, perhaps, if we got a glimpse of her stern and could make out her home port. But never mind, that's good enough for now."

There came the slam of a cabin door from inside the schooner. There was a voice lifted in muffled protest, as if a hand were held over the mouth of somebody attempting to call for help. All these sounds came up through the open skylight.

Now the pattering of bare feet across a deck as if somebody were scampering away

from a fearsome thing. A door must have opened, for the muffled cries suddenly became more distinct. And there was an outburst of subdued whimperings, followed by inarticulate bursts of rage. Along with this confused murmur came the jingling of metallic objects, like chains rattled together.

"Don't stand any nonsense with him," came the coffee-grinder voice again. "Bring him along, and no matter if you break a bone or two."

THERE was a strip of the schooner's deck visible to Ballard and Ogden. It was on the side of the vessel farthest away. And part of the door of the forward bulkhead of the main-cabin could be seen. The limit of their vision to the foredeck of the vessel was a corner of the hatch coaming just abaft the mainmast.

Along with the subdued cries coming out from the partly open door, there were sounds of scuffling, and the sharp blows of heels being kicked against woodwork.

A heavy-set man came through the doorway. His shirt was torn across one shoulder and his white trousers were stained. A sagging belt held a pair of automatic pistols swinging in front. He walked slowly out on deck, turning to look behind him, waiting for somebody to follow.

"Come on, Hutt," said the heavy man, irritably. "Don't let him play horse with you like that!"

The swaying body of a tall thin man, moving backward and dragging something after him, filled the doorway. His arms were clasped about a figure which soon resolved itself into another man, with legs thrashing about from side to side, but the feet tied together so both legs moved in unison.

As the thin man swung round with his prisoner clear of the doorway, Ballard and Ogden caught sight of a red bandage over the face of the man being thrown about.

"Why, he's gagged!" whispered Ballard. "That's why we didn't hear any words we could make out in all the rumpus they've been having in the cabin!"

"And that thing the heavy man's got in his hand is a pair of ship's irons," said Ogden.

"That's the skipper, I make it, Jim."

Ballard could see now that the heavy man was unlocking one of the rings with a key, which either did not fit very well, or was rusty and refused to enter the locking gear of the irons.

"What the dickens are they up to with that poor chap?" whispered Ogden, his eyes squinting against the strong sunlight on the water below. He shouldered himself forward to get a better view of the scene on the deck of the schooner.

"They've probably had a row at sea, and came in here to finish it up, and probably kill that fellow," said Ballard. "But why the bushes on the schooner? They don't have to hide themselves in a place like this just to get rid of a murdered body."

"Oh, that's no private feud," said Ogden. "They don't need a lonely spot, as you say, to settle the business. It's a row that's started since they came in here, I'd say, and the chap who's gagged won't work in with the skipper's plans, whatever they are. So the skipper's going to iron him so he can't interfere in the game that's to be played."

"That's about the answer," agreed Ballard.

The tall man hurled his victim up against the bulkhead. He was pinned to the boarding by the hands of the man spoken to as Hutt, and held in place temporarily while his feet flopped about.

The heavy man laid down the irons and reached behind him. There was a flash of sunlight on a naked blade. Ogden caught his breath in a sharp hiss and reached for one of his automatics.

Ballard threw up a restraining hand, understanding the purpose of the skipper better than Ogden had, for the latter had jumped to the conclusion that a helpless man was to be knifed against the bulkhead.

The knife snicked downward and slashed at the cords which held the prisoner's feet.

"Stand up on your pins!" commanded the heavy man.

The wavering knees bent as they took the weight of their owner, then straightened for an instant.

The thin man stood aside and left the bound man leaning against the bulkhead, sagging limply on his hips, his tied hands hanging down in front, blackly barred by the cords which lashed them together.

"I'm going to take that rag off your head next," went on the skipper. "But I'm tellin' you it won't do you no good to yell

for help. The Lascar crew's below, and there's nobody but jungle monkeys to hear you. Understand?"

The man against the bulkhead nodded assent.

"All right, good thing you begin to understand I don't waste my breath. Hutt, take the rag off him and we'll give him a chance to yarn a bit."

Hutt stepped forward warily, keeping an arm up as a guard as he approached the victim, ran his finger in between cheek and cloth and with a quick downward jerk stripped the fabric over the victim's chin. The red cloth fell about the neck of the bearded man—the first time Ballard and Ogden had a clear sight of his full face.

"Now, Mr. Ross," said the heavy man. "You've got a chance to talk a little, and all the time in the clock."

There was a spasmodic twisting of Ross' head, as if he choked. Then he spat out an object which fell to the deck and rolled to the low side of the schooner.

"What is all this, anyhow?" demanded Ross thickly, his mouth dripping with froth. It was plain enough that he was weak and spent, for his voice shrilled in a thin cackle that had little force.

"I've told you a little, but I don't have to tell you anything," said the heavy man. "You *know* what you come to this place for, and——"

"You put me ashore at Nyata village, Captain Grafton!" raged Ross. "That's what I paid you to do, you —— scoundrel! And I'll make you pay for this, Grafton, or I'll——"

"Oh, save your breath to blow your porridge!" snapped Captain Grafton. "You know what I want you to tell about, so come through, or I'll waste no more time on you."

He stooped, picked up the irons on the deck and shook them impatiently—threateningly.

"What's become of Mr. Marsh?" asked Ross, turning and looking about the decks forward.

"Oh, we've put Mr. Marsh where the dogs won't bite him," replied Grafton. "What I want out of you is the stuff. Where is it? No shilly-shallyin' about it. We know all about you, and why you come down here. Now, where is it? That's all we want out of you, so speak up."

"Where's what?" demanded Ross in amazement.

"Now look here!" snapped Grafton, with a menacing shake of the irons as he stepped close to Ross. "I'll iron you and swing you into the hold on a line, to hang there till you decide it'll improve your health. I ain't here to waste time. You can shut up if you want to, and take the consequences—or cough up."

"I don't know what you're drivin' at all," protested Ross weakly. "I ain't got anything to cough up, so I don't know what you beat me up for, nor what you mean by this talk of irons and all. You sound crazy to me, but crazy or not, I'll have the law on——"

"I make my law as I go along," said Grafton. "Here, slap the irons on him, Hutt—only cut the lashings first, and put his paws behind him when you secure the shackles."

Hutt stepped forward, and seizing Ross's hands, hooked a blade under the cords. The old man made no resistance; he only stood limply against the bulkhead, threatening to collapse from weakness.

Captain Grafton held the irons forward to the mate, who reached for them. It was then that the pair discovered that Ross had been shamming weakness, for at that instant he darted aside with the speed and agility of a boxer. He escaped the grasp of the startled skipper, wriggled and twisted with a dancing motion out of reach of Hutt, and bounded across the deck.

He gained the bulwarks on the outer side, away from the shore, and with surprizing vitality, leaped into the bushes lashed upright to the side of the schooner, and like a rabbit, dived over the side.

Ballard and Ogden heard a splash. At once there was an angry clamor from Grafton and Hutt—anger, dismay, alarm. They dashed out of sight of the watchers on shore, and could be heard thrusting aside the screen of brush through which Ross had escaped.

Two pistol shots punctured the following moment of silence.

"YOU blasted tailor, Hutt!" raged Captain Grafton, after he had fired his pistol at Ross, probably swimming for cover on the outer side of the schooner. "You've got the fat in the fire now! What'n ——'d you let him slip through your fingers like that for?"

"I thought you was watchin' him!" retorted Hutt.

"We got a mess on our hands! Jump after him—I'll turn the crew loose to chase him! He's gone under the stern, and is makin' for the jungle."

"Put a boat over for me," said Hutt, and Ballard and Ogden heard a second splash which told them that the mate had taken to the water after Ross. Then followed the regular splashing of a swimmmer.

The schooner hid the pursuit from the watchers. Presently there came a tearing and rustling of vines at the water's edge. Next, the straining of the vines told that one of the swimmers had dragged himself up on the steep shore. This was followed by a mad scrambling in the brush for cover, and the whole line of mangroves quivered, making it impossible to tell the exact spot where the fugitive was fighting up the hillside.

"He's got away all right, so far," whispered Ballard.

"Good job, too, I'd say. Lay low, and we'll see if they get him. If they do, I've a mind to step in and have a say on it until I know what it's all about."

"Sure, we can't let 'em murder that man," agreed Ballard.

On top of the splash made by Hutt's dive, there had come a pounding on what must have been the forecastle scuttle, judging by the hollow reverberations after the blows. Immediately there was a chorus of shrill voices.

"That's the native crew," said Ballard. "They've been locked in the forecastle, and——"

Captain Grafton bawled orders to the *serang* in Malay and English. He wanted a boat put off to help Hutt, and men sent into the jungle to pursue the runaway white man. And the skipper offered a reward of ten Straits dollars to the man who brought back the captive, and a hundred dollars to be divided among the crew in addition to the prize for capture when the white man was brought back aboard.

Grafton came rushing aft, in sight once more, a pistol in each hand.

"He's made a landin' near the stern, Hutt! Hustle along!"

He disappeared on the quarterdeck.

Hutt seemed to be still furiously pawing his way through the water, hampered by the descending shoots of the mangroves and the mess of vines and bushes that grew down into the water. He floundered about, hauling on vines that were already broken or which parted when he threw a strain on them.

"I saw where he got ashore," spluttered Hutt. "But these blasted vines are broke, and I'm fouled in bog and bushes. Git that boat round to me!"

Already there was a thumping of boat gear and a whining of falls in blocks. The *serang* chattered like a monkey, driving his Lascars to speed.

At the same time some of the native sailors were scrambling among the bushes ashore just below where Ballard and Ogden lay concealed. Everything was wild confusion, for the Lascars yelled questions and answers back and forth, and bustled about in the jungle without making much progress.

They did not seem to relish the job of chasing a white man who had escaped, themselves having been prisoners in a hot forecastle but a few minutes before. Ogden realized, as he understood some of the words that passed among them, that they were inclined to quit the schooner along with the fugitive.

There came another report of a pistol. The bullet crashed through the litter of branches overhead and then skittered its way through the green wall beyond the two planters.

"He's just shooting wild!" grumbled Ogden.

The next shot made a leaf fall over Ogden's head, and he heard the bullet go *smack* into a rotten tree trunk just a few feet above him.

"We'd better get out of here, if that fool's going to pepper the brush with lead," observed Ballard. "Anyhow, some of the Lascars are beginning to get up this way."

Ogden nodded, and forcing themselves to an upright position through the vines, they began to beat back for the trail without bothering about the noise they made. The whole jungle was full of men thrashing about by now, and a little noise more or less made no difference.

Again a bullet came over, close enough this time to make a hissing sound. Its progress was marked by the rapid snicking of leaves it perforated, the whole being like a fast tattoo beaten upon some stretched fabric.

"Maybe he thinks we're his Mr. Ross,"

said Ballard, as he rested a minute. "The skipper may be able to see us, or had a glimpse of us, and blazed away. Keep still a while."

"We might as well crash out to the trail and get away for now," said Ogden.

But he paused long enough to listen to a violent agitation of the jungle wall up on the slope of the ridge, and plainly making progress for higher ground.

"That's the bird that got away—he's made good headway," said Ogden. "Come on. If we come up with him, we may be able to help him, and find out what's going on."

Without further ado he launched himself against the brush and beat it down before him, making straight for the trail.

They could hear Hutt scrambling into the boat, and calling to Captain Grafton that the boat could make a landing nearer the shore line.

"Then git ashore there," commanded Grafton. "And if you can't bring him back alive, bring him back dead. We can't let him make a getaway and meet up with the planter crowd."

"All right," sang out Hutt. "You're the doctor," and he made his rowers give way with the oars to bring him to the spot selected for landing.

In a few minutes Ballard and Ogden had gained the narrow cut through the bushes which was the heavily overhung trail that slanted down from the crest of the ridge. In a few yards they had reached the abandoned hut where their jackets were hidden. Here they stopped to breathe and listen.

There was a steady but subdued rattling of the leaves higher up. This sound was diminishing rapidly, showing that the fugitive was gaining distance on his pursuers.

"They won't catch him now," said Ogden.

He was drenched with perspiration, as was Ballard, their shirts sticking wetly to their shoulders. The clothing of both of them was covered with the stains of reddish mud, which was as sott as a damp jungle fungus, where they had been crawling about.

"He'll probably show up at the bungalow," said Ballard.

He turned his head to listen to what was going on down in the bay. It appeared that by this time the boat had made a landing and that Hutt and the crew were beating the bushes. And the skirmish line of chattering Lascars was advancing slowly up the slopes.

"They've lost him now," said Ogden. "I'd say from the way his racket has died out that he's got into the second growth of that old clearing that was used for hill-rice, so he'll make good time now to the house or the settlement."

"Yes, we'd better get back home. It won't be long before some of the natives bring word that there's a strange white man about, and it'll be easy enough for us to get in touch with him."

They could hear Captain Grafton yelling to Hutt for a report on progress, and the skipper swearing wrathfully because there seemed no immediate hope of a capture.

The first patterings of a shower struck the jungle top, and then a gentle downpour began to seethe through the foliage.

Ballard and Ogden hurried along the trail, Ballard in the lead. By the time they had gained the crest of the ridge on the back track, the swamps and the narrow cliff-incased bay where the schooner lay were invisible in the warm fog arising as a result of the rain.

Drenched through, they hastened for home.

APPROACHING the bungalow from the back, so as to appear to be returning from the settlement, Ballard and Ogden saw smoke rising from the cook house. They went in to get the comfort of a fire while they changed their clothes.

The Malay cookboy reported the return of the masters, and Dang Chee came running along the sheltered gangway from the house, bearing dry clothing and smoking gear.

With that discretion which marked his conduct in such cases, the old Chinese bundled up belts and pistols so that neither the cookboys nor the houseboys caught a glimpse of them, and smuggled them back into the house to be cleaned and oiled. But not a question did he ask, though he seemed to know, just by the look in his eyes, the full details of what his masters had seen and heard over on the other side of the ridge.

"You know," commented Ogden, as he stood before the heat of the range and stripped off his wet clothes, "I wouldn't be a lot surprized if the old boy already had

a complete report of everything that happened. He looks as if he's swallowed the canary, and the cockatoo, also."

Ballard laughed.

"You're getting to be an oriental yourself, when it comes to observing. But I'd bet the chink can out-think us when it comes to a smooth game."

"Perhaps—but he hasn't thought himself out of being a boss-servant. Still, we needn't show any startled surprize if that old man Ross should be eating a lunch in the front living room."

"Oh, Dang would report *that*," said Ballard.

In a few minutes they were sitting on the front veranda, dressed in clean whites, with steaming bowls of tea before them. The rain was letting up, and the skies were clearing in the west.

Their pistols were back in the belts, having been brought out by Dang Chee. He took it for granted there was something afoot which made it desirable that his masters be well armed.

Sango, the monkey, chattered for attention, and the cockatoo, now up in the rafters where he was safe from the spatter of rain, preened his damp feathers and told the world he had little use for it.

"Say, Dang, you see white man?" asked Ogden.

"He no come this side, *tuan*," replied Dang.

"I didn't ask you if he come this side—I talk you see him?"

"Two time me see him, master."

Ogden glanced at Ballard.

"Two time you see new white man, you no tell me?" chided Ogden. "What this talk mean?"

"You savvy this white man," replied the Chinese calmly.

"Oh, do I?" demanded Ogden. "What I savvy, just the same you talk it to me, Dang. Two time I savvy this then, you see?"

Dang nodded, and cast a watchful eye over his shoulder inside the house.

"Too much listen this place," he explained.

"Maybe you're right about *that*," said Ogden. "But is there anything you don't know, most precious of servants?"

"Bimeby short time you fight," said Dang. "White man come over this side, no good pidgin."

"You've said it, chinkie! So keep your eyes open, and your ears to the front. Maybe then you see some pidgin we not see, eh?"

"Maybe this be, master." And Dang Chee drifted away like a blue ghost when Ogden gave the sign of dismissal.

"That canny old bird has something up his sleeve, I'll bet," grinned Ballard as he sucked his hot tea from the side of the bowl. "Leave him alone—when he's ready he'll spring it."

The shower ended as suddenly as it had begun. In a minute Nyata was bathed in sunlight again, steaming the rain out of the trees and ground. The air had a new sparkle in it, and the fronds of the mop-headed palms below the house and all the surrounding greenery was suddenly vivid and full of new life. Even the subdued murmur of the surf seemed to have a brisker tone in it, but this was because the seething of the rain had drowned out the sullen boom of the rollers.

Ogden snapped to his feet.

"What's that?" he whispered.

He pointed over the top of the veranda rail to the left front.

Ballard looked down into the flowering shrubs which marked the far line of their garden, and the wall of jungle on that side. He caught sight of something that had come into view for a second, then popped out of sight. He had only seen it out of the tail of his eye at the instant Ogden had stood up. So Ballard could not be sure of what it was.

"I'll bet that's the runaway, kicking around in the brush over there," whispered Ogden. "I could swear I got a glimpse of his head."

"Don't scare him away," cautioned Ballard. "If we go after him, he'll probably skip. And he's the one we want to talk to most of all."

"Let's give him a hail," suggested Ogden.

"Hello, there!" called Ballard. "Why don't you come up to the house and have a drink? You're welcome, whoever you are!"

There was no reply. Then, in a few minutes, a drenched figure came into view slowly, a stooped and oldish figure with clothes that had been white but were now gray with water. He was hatless, and a red handkerchief swung in a loop from his neck. His face was covered with short black whiskers. They knew it was Ross—

a thoroughly dejected human being, wet to the marrow and shivering with chill.

"You—you the owners here?" he called croakingly.

"We are," replied Ballard. "And you're welcome. Come up and get into dry clothes, man!"

But Ross was plainly distrustful. He studied the house with peering eyes, and turned quickly to look behind him.

"Any — strangers — new-come — stopping with you?" he asked.

"No strangers on the island except yourself, so far as we know," said Ballard, with a wink at Ogden, to convey the hint that it might be just as well not to admit they had any knowledge of the schooner. "Let's see what kind of a yarn he'll hand out if he thinks we're in the dark," whispered Ballard.

"All right, I'll come up," said Ross, and stepped forward with eager willingness. But before he had gained half a dozen yards across the open space, he stopped and looked behind him.

"Come on," urged Ballard. "There's nothing behind you."

The old man muttered something which the planters could not make out. He stood irresolute, scanning the dripping, sun-drenched slopes below and the opening of the trail where he had left the jungle.

"Poor old blighter!" breathed Ogden. "He looks all in."

Ballard swept the beaches and the jungles with his glasses, but there was no sign of any moving thing.

"I don't believe the schooner gang would dare follow him this far."

Ross finally turned toward the bungalow again and came shuffling forward, walking gingerly, for it was plain now that only one foot was shod with a mud-covered shoe.

As he got close to the house, he broke into a slow trot, turning his head to look over his shoulder as if in fear of being brought down by a rifle bullet from the distant ridges.

He mounted the stoop with trembling knees, one hand pressed against the small of his back and his mouth twisted in pain. His unshod foot was lame, and he breathed spasmodically.

At the edge of the veranda he swung round, his knees gave way under him, and he toppled to the matting.

"I—I didn't aim to come so far," he gasped, as Ballard and Ogden sprang forward to help him. "Just took a little walk to look round—and got caught in the rain—and lost my way."

"DANG CHEE! Bring a bottle for a sick man!" called Ogden, as they helped Ross to a reclining veranda chair.

The Chinese brought spirits and the old man was given a drink. In a few minutes he had recovered and was staring about him.

Ross had the appearance of a man of sixty, or more. The black beard, shot with gray hair, grew almost to his eyes. His face was thin, but the beard was so trimmed as to give his cheeks a rounded appearance. His hair was matted down over his head after the drenching rain, and fell over his forehead in a clinging bang because he had drawn it down with the palm of his hand to squeeze the water out of it.

His lips were bluish from exhaustion, and the lower one was inclined to sag and tremble. He shivered in his wet clothes. His hands were stiff and his fingers uncertain as they grasped the glass with the liquor.

His eyes were gray, and the lids were red. As he looked about him there was still a trace of terror in the old eyes, as if he expected to sight some horrific thing and wanted to be ready to flee on an instant's warning.

"I—I'm all petered out," he said, looking up at Ballard, who stood over him. "Mighty good of you to take me in this way—but I'm gettin' mud on your decks."

He lifted his feet, from which streams of reddish water ran over the veranda matting.

"Oh, don't worry about that," said Ballard. "You've got to have some food, so sit still and take it easy, and we'll fix you up with what you need."

A Malay boy brought a hot bowl of tea and Ross drank it off thirstily. Then, noting that his bare wrists revealed the ringed lacerations made by the cords that had tied them aboard the schooner, he pulled down the sleeves to cover the marks.

This action was surprizing to Ballard and Ogden. They thought that he would be willing to tell what had happened to him, but he seemed far more anxious to conceal the evidence of his ill-treatment aboard the schooner.

He went on supping his tea, his weak eyes dreamily staring at the little pools of water that gathered about him and his muddy feet, seeping slowly across the matting in stains of grotesque shape. He held one hand across his chest as if to keep closed the sodden gingham shirt which stuck to his bones.

"You'll have to put on dry clothes," said Ballard. "If you can go back to the cook house——"

Ross raised his head as if startled out of a nap.

"Oh, me!" he wheezed. "Yes, I reckon I'll have to have somethin' dry. But I'm all right; just a little tuckered. The rain ketched me. I didn't know it was so far up here— They told me at the native town that I'd find white men up this side."

"Oh, so you came from the native village—round on the other side of the bay, eh?" asked Ballard.

He knew Ross could not have been to the native settlement, three miles away, and back again, since his escape from the schooner. In fact, Ross had come straight from Cañon Bay, or as straight as he could come over the trails. It was plain that Ross was lying.

"Yes, I come up from the village. Ross is my name. They told me it wasn't far to this house, but you know how much you can trust natives. Shouldn't've tried to make the trip, and besides, I got lost on my way. Them trails are easy to git off, you know—special, when it's rainin' heavy."

"Yes, I know," said Ballard, and motioned the servants away. "But here comes a boy with dry duds for you. You'd better try and step around the corner and change where it's warm, if you feel able to now. The boy'll give you a hand."

"Well, that's neighborly," said Ross, as he surveyed the boy with an armful of clothes. "But I didn't aim to impose on you gents, just wanted to mosey around the island, and look things over up this way. Didn't think I'd come visitin'—and on strangers—and have to beg for a new kit o' clothes."

He stood up and pulled the cuffs down over his wrists again. Then, to the creaking of a water-logged shoe, he followed the boy with the clothes, leaving wet tracks on the matting.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" whispered Ogden, when the old man was out of hearing. "Here he has to jump for his life out of the *Timor Laut*—and he tries to fool us into believing that he's just made a mosey up from the settlement!"

"Why the dickens should he lie to us like that?" asked the dumfounded Ballard. "Covers up the bruises on his wrists! And when we expected to get an earful about the way he's been abused, he actually attempts to hide from us the marks of the skipper's lines on his hands! It's beyond me!"

"What he wants to do," said Ogden, "is protect the two on that schooner who've beat him up!"

"Protect 'em, yes! While he gets protection from us! He's willing to keep us in the dark about the schooner, and at the same time say nothing that'd get the *Timor Laut* people in a jam! It's beyond me!"

They sat down and looked at each other in blank amazement. There seemed to be nothing to do but wait and see what would come of the strange schooner and the stranger guest who had come to the house.

"Maybe the smooth old party'll go back to the *Timor Laut*," said Ogden finally. "I'd just as soon he does—if he's so anxious to cover up for 'em, we've got a stick of dynamite on our hands. It'll be us that's in a jam, if they come here and try to kill him—and I don't want to get shot in the back. If we're to risk stray bullets, we ought to know something about what it's for."

"Sure, we're holding his sack," agreed Ballard. "But he may track off for the settlement, or hide in the jungle, and wait for some vessel to come in and give him a chance to get away."

"Maybe, yes," said Ogden. "But why so mum on the *Timor Laut*? I'll tell you why—whatever the crookedness is that's going on, he was in on it first. They had a row, and while he'll most likely get killed if the *Timor Laut* gang find him, he's good and careful that we don't know how he came to be here."

"Looks that way. And it's certain that he expects to quit us before long—anyhow, before we find out that he's lying. He must know we'll get wind of the schooner before so very long."

"Let's just let him lie, and when he goes, put the two trackers on him to see where he lands up."

They sat without words for several

minutes, knowing it would not be long before Ross was back from the cook house. And in a few minutes he appeared, wearing an old suit of Ballard's white ducks and old shoes. His wet hair was brushed back on his head and curled about his ears and on the back of his neck. His pale eyes had new life in them, and he looked far more respectable now, for his face was clean and the warmth of the cook house had put new life in him.

For a minute he paused at the corner of the veranda and studied the rim of the jungle on the side from which he had approached the house.

One of the Malays was setting food on the table, and as Ross drew near the two planters, it began to rain again in a slow drizzle which brought on the jungle fog and made the sea steam itself into invisibility.

"Feel better now?" asked Ballard, as he got to his feet.

"Feelin' a lot better, thanks," he replied briskly. "I'm lucky to fall in with such men, I tell you *that!* Not everybody to pick up a wet old sailor like me—I might be a bummin' beachcomber for all you know."

He cackled in a laugh at the joke.

"We enjoy visitors," said Ballard. "Get's lonesome here, month in and month out. Now sit down and have a bite of lunch."

"That chow for me? Well, well! But I warn you right now I ain't got any money on me to settle for what you do—I don't want to be so much trouble and expense and not do somethin' to hold up my end. You'll think I'm just a common ordinary tramp, that's come along to take advantage——"

Ballard and Ogden both laughed at him.

"Eat—and then the bill for the meal will be a thousand dollars."

"Well, I'll try and do somethin' for you," said Ross. "I'm grateful, and it may be when my schooner comes back, I'll be able to make things right."

He sat down so that he could face the outer railing of the veranda.

"Your schooner!" said Ballard. "Why, we didn't know there was any vessel at the bay off the settlement!"

Ross blinked his eyes in pretended surprize.

"You didn't? Well, we got in this mornin'—early. And I stayed ashore while she sailed up to t'other end of the island to see what chance there was to pick up some sandalwood from the natives."

"A sandalwooder, eh! What's her name?"

Ross hesitated for the slightest moment, but spoke with seeming frankness.

"Thought you knew all about her. I'm mate of her."

He reached out a hand for a biscuit and stabbed into the canned butter with a knife.

"You didn't mention her name," persisted Ballard.

"Her name? Oh, yes—I got so wet I'm kind of turned round in my head. My brains ain't thawed out yet—her name, yes—the *Tamil;* that's her name. Trader from down S'pore way. Cap'n White's skipper—and I guess you know of *him?*"

Ballard shook his head. He was surprized at the suavity with which this old man could lie.

"No, I haven't heard of Captain White, nor the *Tamil.* But I don't keep track of traders much, because our products are handled by our regular line for our factors. Also we control the sandalwood of this island, so I'll be pleased to have a talk with your Captain White."

"That so?" asked Ross blandly. "Then somebody's got their lines fouled. The skipper said he'd heard of you two young men, but didn't know your concession covered the whole island. But of course I'll have the skipper up here. I'll go fetch him myself first thing in the mornin'. If you could give me a shake-down that's dry for the night, I'd——"

"Oh, certainly," said Ballard. "We'll put you up. And maybe when I've talked with Captain White I can arrange with him to take a special cargo to S'pore for us—some stuff that wasn't ready when the last regular schooner sailed, and that's overdue on the market now."

Ross went on with his eating and did not make any answer for a few minutes.

"I don't know just what port we're headed for next, but I reckon the *Tamil* can help you out if she's back for S'pore way before long."

Ballard shifted the conversation to island topics, and did not press the old man further on the matter of the schooner. He and Ogden had arrived at the same conclusion—that for some mysterious reason Ross wanted to give the *Timor Laut* time to attend to whatever business it had in hand, and get away. There was no doubt in the

minds of the young planters, as they saw things, Ross intended to mislead them utterly about the *Timor Laut*.

The rain had again become a deluge, the low eaves of thatch over the veranda streaming with sheets of water. The bungalow was once more isolated from the surrounding world as completely as if a gray blanket had been dropped around it. The rain battered at the brush of the jungle and the air was filled with the murmur and chucklings of new formed streams on the hillside.

Without warning, Ross leaped from his chair to an upright position, and gave a cry. His eyes were riveted to a spot in the outer mists, and an expression came over his face that showed amazement.

"Marsh!" he whispered to himself. "That's Marsh, ain't it?"

Then, horror in his eyes, he sprang backward with such violence that his chair was overturned. His breath came in wheezy gasps.

"It's Hutt!" he whispered, and threw up a hand across his face as if to ward off a blow.

Without explaining anything to Ballard and Ogden; in fact, he seemed oblivious of their presence, he turned and sneaked through the door into the living-room, his knees bending under him as he walked. He cowered behind the high sill of a partly-open *kajang*.

Watching Ross in puzzled doubt, the Malay boy who had approached the table with dishes, was seized with a panic of fear and fled round the corner of the veranda. As the patter of his feet died away his voice could be heard chattering to the cook that the strange white man had seen a demon.

"There's something moving across the open space," said Ogden quietly, as he drew a pistol. "I caught a glimpse of it myself, something yellow and without much shape. Looked as if it was floating through the air, and that's what Ross must have seen."

BALLARD whipped a pistol out of a holster.

"I see that yellow spot moving slowly," he whispered to Ogden. "It's a—"

But again the curtain of mist closed in, and what Ballard had just spied was once more invisible. But he could hear the soft padding of feet over oozy wet soil and grass.

Then, as the pair strained their eyes into the rainy murk, a dim form took shape out of the grayness. A head and shoulders, with a sort of yellowish halo floating over them, came into sight.

They showed themselves only vaguely, like a ghost materializing out of smoky vapor, and unable to make visible its legs. It seemed to Ballard only a momentary illusion created by his own eyes, so impalpable was the strange vision.

As suddenly as it had appeared, the apparition had faded out at the edges and became again only the gray mist which had served it for background. And now the mud-sucking feet ceased their tramping.

Ballard put his face close to Ogdens' ear.

"It's a man, right enough," he whispered. "I'd say he's wearing an oilskin jacket that's faded, and a yellowish sou'wester that's rather newer than the jacket."

Ogden grinned.

"Sure!" he breathed. "It's somebody out of the *Timor Laut* hunting our friend behind the *kajang*. That's what Ross saw —and when he knew what it was he wanted to hunt cover *pronto*."

The scared chatterings of the Malay boys in the cook house drifted out to the front of the building. And as Ogden glanced behind him, he saw the upper part of Ross's head, his eyes just above the round bamboo that formed the top of the sill of the *kajang* along the cut wall of the *attap* side of the house.

"Why don't you come in out of the rain?" called Ballard easily out front.

He heard Ross give a gasp of pained surprize at the invitation to the lurker, and the head peering over the sill disappeared out of sight.

"Who in Tophet be you?" came the answer out of the mists. It was the nasal voice they had heard on the deck on the schooner a while back, and recognized it as belonging to the mate.

"That's Israel Hutt!" said Ross in a scared whisper from behind his covert. "Don't let him come!"

Ogden sprang to the *kajang*.

"Keep still!" he cautioned in a sharp whisper. "We won't let him know you're here, and nobody'll hurt you. We've got to find out what he wants."

He stepped back beside Ballard.

"My name is Ballard. I'm one of the planters that's in charge of Nyata Island. Who are you?"

There was a snicker from the invisible Hutt.

"Oh, I'm just havin' a look around, mister"

Ballard laughed.

"If it's scenery that you're hunting, you won't see much."

"Seen any strangers, mister?"

"Come up to the veranda if you want an answer to your questions."

"I guess, mister, you can't answer none of my questions."

But as he answered he moved forward warily and became visible in part.

He was stooping and the heavier ground mists concealed the lower part of his body, while the driving rain that beat upon his sou'wester broke, making a nebulous rim about his head.

His dripping and straw-colored mustache, his thin, wrinkled face lined with dirty streaks where the rain had leaked through the lining of his headgear and drizzled down over his cheeks, were plain enough to ordinary vision now.

And as he seemed to be grinning, the open gap in his upper teeth was a black pit in the center of his water-shrouded face. He held one hand under the edge of his oilskin jacket in front, thrust between the buckles which held it together.

"Then," said Ballard, "if I can't answer your questions, I can tell you something, my friend. I have the authority to arrest you as long as you prowl about on this island and refuse to give your name and tell where you came from. Understand that?"

"Sure, I understand. You just start in and arrest," was the insolent retort.

"Maybe you think I couldn't do it."

"I guess you'd find you'd bitten off more than you could chaw, mister."

"That remains to be seen," said Ballard. "And perhaps you don't think I know the name of your schooner."

"I dunno that I told you her name," retorted Hutt. "And even if you do know it, I ain't standin' much chance of losin' a lot of sleep."

"Your schooner might be the *Tamil*," ventured Ballard.

The shot went home. Hutt's head snapped back and the front rim of the down-turned sou'wester slanted to the sky. There was a startled look on his face, and his mouth hung open.

"Say, where'd you hear her name was *that?*" he demanded.

"I don't know that I mentioned how I heard it."

Hutt's expression changed, and he gave a contemptuous gurgle of laughter as if he appreciated the joke and felt that he was in company that knew how to deal with him.

"Say, you're smart, ain't you!" he exclaimed.

"Not much, but maybe smart enough for this business, Mr. Hutt."

"Oho! You know my name!"

"Glad you admit it's yours—it'll save us a lot of argument."

Hutt thought it over for a minute. His expression had soured again and he looked angry. With sudden resolve he lifted his mud-heavy feet and with slow strides that indicated he was in no hurry to accomplish his purpose, he began to draw nearer the veranda. His feet sucked the muck at each step and his loose trousers of oilskins made a swishing sound as he advanced.

"Yes, my name's Hutt," he announced, and grinned openly, sloshing his way to the lower step of the stoop. There he paused, leaning against the bamboo rail and staring up at Ballard and Ogden from just outside the wall of water which fell from the eaves of the thatched roof.

His eyes noted the pistols they held in their hands and he smiled—or appeared to. But the crinkling of the flesh about the eyes may only have been the result of the tiny rivulets that ran down his forehead as he thrust back the sou'wester to have a better view of the two planters.

Hutt stood thus in a limp and lazy attitude of carelessness for all the water that splashed about him on the steps and fell upon his body. His eyes remained fastened upon the pistols in the hands of Ballard and Ogden.

"Why don't you come up on the veranda?" asked Ballard. "You're welcome enough, Mr. Hutt."

"I don't know that I want to be around so much artillery," he replied. "And I'd a whole lot rather wait out here for you to come and arrest me."

His impudence was amazing, and his peculiar insolence had a quality of its own. It somehow lacked offensiveness, yet was clearly intended to anger and annoy as much as possible.

"As long as I know your name and your schooner," said Ballard, "it isn't necessary, so far, to arrest you. And I only care to arrest persons who appear not to want to be arrested. As you don't seem worried at the idea of arrest, I don't see any particular reason to make trouble for you."

"Oh, I see," said Hutt, with that same easy insolence.

"Only," went on Ballard, "you haven't told me where you came from."

Hutt lowered his head and thought that over. Then the sou'wester lifted.

"Do I have to tell?" he asked, showing the gap in his teeth in a grin that was mostly a leer of covert insult.

"No," admitted Ballard. "You don't, because I've a fairly good idea of where you came from—and why."

Hutt rolled his slow gray eyes from Ogden to Ballard.

"Say, you two know a lot, don't you?"

"As much as we need," countered Ballard.

"Sure of that—and where I'm from?" jerred Hutt."

"Sure enough of it. There's a vessel in the bay off the native settlement, and you look like a seaman."

Hutt's astonishment was not at all feigned. He actually gasped or snorted.

"By golly!" he exclaimed. "You *do* know a lot. I guess there ain't much use tryin' to fool you—you've got the low-down on me, mister. Sure there's a vessel in the settlement."

"Come on up and sit down," said Ballard, pointing to a chair. "We'll have a gab and a drink."

HUTT shook his head at Ballard's invitation.

"No," said the mate with a knowing twinkle in his eyes, "but thanks just the same. It ain't that I don't trust you two gents—but I just ain't much of a visitin' man." Then, pointing to the muddied matting, he went on drawlingly, "Looks to me you've had enough folks aboard you with dirty dogs for one day, and me, I'm all gummed up."

He lifted a mud-smeared boot and let the miniature waterfall from the thatch wash it.

"Yes," said Ballard. "We've had callers or, rather, a caller. He was a friend of yours."

Hutt's head darted forward on his long neck, and his sou'wester, pinched into a point in front now, gave the movement a sinister quality, suggesting the darting out of the head of an angry snapping turtle.

"How do you know he was a friend of mine?" he demanded.

"Don't know, except that he said he was. You know more about that than I do."

Hutt sneezed. When he had recovered he once more took in the belts and pistols of the planters.

"Do you always keep your belts full of guns around here and hold 'em in your hands when you have visitors?" he asked.

"Not always," said Ballard. "Sometimes we put the guns away—and sometimes we shoot with 'em."

"Ever hit anything?" Hutt was once more in a jokingly insolent mood.

"Not always, but often enough to have a few graves over on the side of the hills under some nice shady trees."

Hutt shook his head in feigned seriousness.

"You're a couple of pretty tough mugs," he commented.

"Glad you think so," said Ballard with a grin.

"S'pose you two shiver when you see your shadows," went on Hutt.

He was frankly killing time now, and his eyes were studying the muddy marks left by Ross. The mate seemed to be trying to figure out whether Ross had left the place after visiting, or was still at the bungalow.

"We're satisfied," continued Ballard, "if the other fellow shivers. That's only in case he's likely to be a bad actor himself."

Hutt threw out an expressive hand.

"See!" he exclaimed. "That's why I ain't come up on your piazza—you're likely to make a mistake about me and think I'm a bad actor. And if I got a bullet in my gizzard it'd be too late to explain that I'm only a harmless sort of a guy who makes a livin' singin'."

"We've got tree toads here," said Ballard, "who sing for us during the evening. And the chink boss-boy can swing a pretty good tune if he's got aboard a double drink of gin. So we're pretty well fixed, Mr. Hutt, on singing."

"Meanin', I s'pose, that you don't need my services as a singer."

"Meaning exactly that," said Ballard.

Ogden lighted a cigaret and gazed out

into the rain, as if extremely contented without any additional company.

"I might sing anyway," said Hutt.

His eye had been wandering to the sill of the *kajang*. He seemed aware that somebody was hiding behind it.

"You might—but not so very long, perhaps," said Ballard.

"Oh, I've shot a man for better singin' than I can do," replied Hutt.

"Say, what do you want around here, anyway?" demanded Ballard. "You don't want to come up and sit down, and you don't seem in any hurry to go. If you've anything to say, speak your little piece—that, or fade."

Hutt met the planter's eye with a shrewd and appraising glance, not at all upset by Ballard's challenge.

"I'm a frank man," said the mate finally. "You've said you had a caller, and he's left his visitin' card on your deck. That's his wake, ain't it?" He pointed to the tracks left by Ross.

"It is."

"Then that's who I'm lookin' for—a partner of mine."

"Prove that you know who he is by kindly telling me his name."

"He ain't exactly a partner in the way you'd expect; he just kind of wandered ashore, and I reckon he got lost in the rain. He's an old party without a hat, and he ain't got much sense. Me, I've always said he wa'n't right in his head—to tell the truth, he's crazy as a loon. Don't depend on nothin' he tells you."

"If he's as crazy as that, what are you chasing him around for?" asked Ballard.

Hutt grinned.

"I'm afraid he'll git his feet wet."

"You have neglected to mention his name."

"Oh, if it's the name that's eatin' of you, his name is Ross—or he says it is."

"Yes, there's an oldish man here named Ross, mate of the schooner *Tamil*—so it can't be your partner, eh?"

Hutt burst into laughter.

"You see! He's a box of nuts. How could he be the mate? Me, I'm the mate. He's only a passenger in the *Tamil*."

"Don't stand there and lie to me," warned Ballard. "You're not the mate of the *Tamil*."

"What be I mate of then?" demanded the surprized Hutt.

"You happen to be the mate of the *Timor Laut*."

Hutt's mouth fell open in wide astonishment. Also, he seemed deeply grieved and disappointed. He made an angry ejaculation under his breath, and his face twisted into a grimace of startled fear.

"Who—who give you that cock-and-bull yarn?" he asked.

"I heard it from a reliable authority."

"Oh, that's old Ross!" snorted Hutt. "He's a crazy liar! You can believe him if you want to, but he——"

"I didn't hear it from him," broke in Ballard. "I heard it from a man who isn't crazy at all, a man by the name of Marsh."

Hutt nearly fell off the stoop.

"Marsh!" he exclaimed. "Why, Marsh, he ain't——"

He checked his words as if realizing that he was admitting too much. He turned and looked out through the rain in an effort to conceal his bewilderment. Then he backed down the steps as if drawing away from a pestilence, and looked about him with queer, birdlike dartings of his thin neck.

"Say," he blurted out again, "You're stringin' me! Marsh ain't left the schooner!"

"Then you know more about it than I do," commented Ballard, apparently perfectly satisfied to be corrected.

Hutt swung back to Ballard, jaw thrust out in open pugnacity, and snarled.

"Where'd you come across Marsh? He ain't been up this way at all! He couldn't, he—well, anyhow, you ain't been where you could see Marsh."

He peered up at Ballard's white clothes and craned a neck to look at the clean and freshly pipe-clayed shoes. Ballard did not present the appearance of a man who had been running around in a rain-soaked jungle only a few minutes before.

"It's none of your business where I saw Marsh," said Ballard, willing to confuse and puzzle Hutt for the purpose of drawing his anger and thus making him reveal something that might be valuable.

At that instant both the planters heard a movement behind them. Ogden turned to look, leaving Ballard to keep watch on Hutt.

Ross had risen from behind the sill of the *kajang*, and shaking his fist at Hutt, cried out—

"You're a murderin' scoundrel, and I'll have the law on——"

"Keep out of sight!" yelled Ogden.

"I'll put you behind the bars, you and your Cap'n Grafton, and you can just——"

Hutt's hand came out from under the edge of his oilskin jacket and a revolver spoke.

The hot puff of the burning powder, the ring-like bulb of white smoke and the sharp whistle of the bullet went past Ballard at a distance of some two feet.

For an instant Hutt was invisible behind the wall of smoke.

But Ballard fired—not so much to hit Hutt as to check his willingness to fire. Two bullets spat into the mud near the mate.

Hutt turned and fled out of sight into the steaming mists of rain.

OGDEN also sent a shot after the fleeing Hutt, and then turned to Ballard.

"I could have pinked him," grinned Ballard, "but I thought it was wiser to save him."

"I didn't try to hit him either," said Ogden. "Knew that if you'd missed him at that range, you wanted to miss."

"I'd rather talk to him than bury him, yes," said Ballard.

"He got the edge on us with the draw, but I guessed he had a gun under that jacket."

Ballard turned to Ross.

"If you'd kept out of sight, you wouldn't have been shot at—and you're mighty lucky he didn't bring you down."

There was a confused clamor of shouts from the cook house, and Dang Chee came running with an old bayonet in his hand.

"It's all right, Dang!" shouted Ballard, and waved the Chinese away.

"He'll be back!" cried Ross. "That murderin' Israel Hutt'll be back. And he'll bring Cap'n Grafton with him next time!"

"I think we can handle *both* of 'em," said Ogden.

"You look out for 'em—you don't know 'em like I do! They're a couple of murderin' hounds, I say, and if you——"

"Keep quiet, please," said Ballard.

He wanted to listen for sounds out in the rain that might tell whether Hutt had gone for good, or had met somebody nearby under cover of the rain.

"But you know who they are—and they'll kill both of you," went on the excited Ross. "Don't blame me——"

"Please keep quiet!" pleaded Ballard. "If we're going to be of any help to you, you've got to give us a chance to deal with the situation, and not be popping up like a jack-in-the-box when we're trying to find out what we ought to know. So calm down and come on out here and answer a few questions."

"I don't want to go out for'ard," objected Ross whiningly from behind the *kajang*, plainly in a condition of abject fear. "They'll kill me, if they catch sight of me. The rain's fallin' off, and I'll be in plain sight when it clears. They'll git me."

"Oh, I think we're capable of protecting you," said Ballard assuringly.

"But you'll git picked off yourself—with a rifle. Hutt knows I've told you something, and that settles your hash with the two of 'em. They can't let you stay alive, gents, now you're onto 'em—know the name of the *Tamil*, and they're own names and——"

He stopped abruptly, suddenly aware of the fact that he had blurted out the name of the *Tamil* as being Hutt's schooner, while the *Tamil* had been represented by himself as being in the bay at the settlement, the schooner which he claimed to belong to as mate.

"All right, stay in where you are, and we'll talk with you from outside," said Ballard. He and Ogden moved close to the *attap* wall, and stood with their backs to it, on each side of the outward projecting *kajang*.

"That man Hutt's dangerous," persisted Ross, his lower lip hanging down and trembling and his old eyes snapping. "You saw yourself, he shot at me, without——"

"Now just a minute!" interrupted Ballard in a kindly tone. "We've taken you in here, Mr. Ross, and now, as you say, we're in danger from this man Hutt and his skipper. Well, we want you to tell us who this Hutt and Captain Grafton are—frankly, and without any attempt to conceal anything at all."

"Why, yes, I suppose you do," said Ross. "And I will. Hutt, he's the mate."

"Mate of what?"

"Mate of the *Tamil*."

"Now look here, Mr. Ross. This kind of thing has gone far enough. You told me you were mate of the *Tamil*."

"Well, I did, yes. I didn't want you two gents to git mixed up in this business—it's dangerous."

"We'll decide how much we'll mix up in it, when we've got the facts," said Ogden, irritated now to the point of exasperation.

"You can do one of two things, Mr. Ross," continued Ballard. "You can tell us the truth, or you can go out into the rain and take your chances with Hutt and Grafton."

"That'd be the end of me," whined Ross.

"We don't want to let you get killed off like that, no. And we don't want to be tooled in a matter which you have already admitted is dangerous business. Please consider us in this thing as well as yourself, and if you play fair, we'll back you up to the limit."

"Maybe I better go anyway," said Ross.

"Suit yourself. You're welcome to such hospitality as we have, and protection with it. But when men come hunting you with a gun, as Hutt has, and shoot into our house, we're entitled to have some idea of what's going on."

"I'm an old man, and Hutt was right—I ain't always right in my head. I hope you won't be too hard on an old simple like me, when I'm——"

"You've played the simple old man with us, we know. But that won't go any more. You're not as old as you'd like us to believe, and you're far from simple. Talk turkey now—who are you and where are you from?"

Ross, who stood in the opening of the *kajang*, rubbed his hands together as he turned and looked out to scan Ballard's face closely. There was a sudden look of keen inquiry in the pale eyes, mingled with craftiness that seemed to be considering just how far the young planter could be deceived.

"I got to trust somebody," said Ross finally with a sigh, "but when you've been through what I've been through, you won't trust *anybody!* No, sir!"

"All right," said Ballard coldly. "Don't trust us if you don't want to. But I think you can take chances with trusting us, rather than trusting Hutt and his skipper."

"I'll trust you, not because I have to, but because I want to. Well, it's this way: I'm bound for S'pore, where I got a brother in business. I'm kind of broken down in health, and that makes me act older—my old head can't always think the way it ought to, so that makes it look sometimes as if I'm lyin'. I ain't got no money to speak of, and that ain't with me, and I'll probably never lay hands on it again. Just had enought cash to pay my passage in the *Tamil*——"

"We've heard enough of the *Tamil*," growled Ogden. "That's not the truth now—so cut it out and come across with the straight stuff."

Ross turned to Ogden with a pained look. The old man's head began to shake with palsied jerks.

"What good does it do for me to talk if you don't believe what I tell you, and how——"

"We know more than you think we do," broke in Ballard. "What we want to hear about is the *Timor Laut*. We've seen her, and what's more, we were within forty or fifty feet of her, hidden in the jungle, when you jumped overboard out of her today. And we'd been listening and watching for some time before that."

"You *was!*" Ross was plainly taken aback and chagrined, at being revealed as not telling an accurate story. "Well, I'm blowed! So you'd seen Hutt——"

"Come on!" said Ogden sharply. "Don't play for time like that—shoot your yarn!"

The old man ran his hand over his head, hardly knowing what to say next.

"I'll tell you what's wrong," he began. "I'm talkin' straight as a string—but it's this stuff about the *Timor Laut*. I never heard of *her!* It *was* the *Tamil* that I took the jump from, so we're all at sea on this thing. When I say *Tamil*, you round on me with *Timor Laut*, so——"

Ballard slapped his thigh.

"Say, Ogden! Of course, Mr. Ross doesn't know anything about the *Timor Laut!*"

"Why not?" asked Ogden.

"She was the *Tamil* when Mr. Ross went aboard her, but when Grafton ran into Cañon Bay, he faked the name of his schooner, and painted a new name on her bows to fool any of us that might by chance see her——"

"You've got it!" cried Ross in excited delight. "They shifted her name plates for'ard!"

"Then go ahead from where you left off," said Ballard. "I guess there's a good chance yet that you're telling the truth after all."

"Gentlemen," resumed Ross, "I'll be frank with you. Come in and let's all sit down, and I'll give you the whole thing as far's I know it."

BALLARD and Ogden passed in through the door, and placing three chairs a little back from it, they put Ross in the center, between them. Then, facing out so as to command a view of the approaches to the bungalow, the planters sat down with their pistols on the arms of the chairs.

"Go ahead with your story," said Ballard. "It'll be dark before very long, and we ought to know all that's to be known before night comes on."

"I don't know a thing of how I come to be in the mess I'm in," resumed Ross, "except that it looks as if the skipper of this schooner *Tamil*—as it was when I went aboard—and Hutt, the mate, are up to something crooked on this island of Nyata."

"But why should they want to kill you, Mr. Ross?" asked Ballard. "They don't have to take your life to be crooked, do they? They could shut you up—or could have dropped you off at some island before they got here if they wanted to make sure you wouldn't know anything against them."

"That's a question I can't answer," said Ross. "Only way I can figure it out is this: They didn't intend to do anything crooked when they started, and they didn't know they wanted to do anything crooked until they got your island abeam, say. But all of a sudden they jumped me—and it looks as if they want to git me out of the way to cover up their tracks."

"But they could have killed you on board the schooner—one bullet would have settled the business. No, they want to do something else before they kill you—but now that you've got away from 'em, they want to wipe you out."

"That's just how it is," said Ross. "Why didn't they kill me this mornin' or this afternoon, as it was, when I jumped overboard? No! They made a lot of talk about puttin' irons on me——"

"First," said Ballard, "let's find out something else. Where is she from, why did you sail in her, and where is she supposed to be bound for?"

"She's from Amoy for S'pore. That's what I was told when I went aboard and paid my passage. There was another passenger—young man name of Marsh—on board. And he kept a close watch on me every minute from the time we sailed. I don't know why, but he watched me like a cat watches a mouse."

"How do you mean he watched you?" asked Ogden. "Just looked at you and studied you?"

"That, yes—under cover. But he went through my baggage, the little I had in my room, and dug through every paper he could lay his hands on."

"What was his reason?"

Ross shook his head.

"More'n I know. But I'd say that whatever that game of Grafton and Hutt is, Marsh is in with 'em on it."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because he spied on me so much. And I'd say he's been watchin' me for some time before I went aboard the schooner in Amoy. I'm sure I've seen him before. I had a little business in Amoy—ship-chandler in a small way. I went bust. And this Marsh—he's been in my little place more'n once, for some months back. He looked awful familiar to me when I saw him in the schooner, but I didn't set no great store on it—thought it was just somebody who went by my place regular and I'm come to know him by his looks."

"Where is he now?"

"On board yet, and I'd say he's a prisoner. That's what I made of a remark Cap'n Grafton let slip when he was keepin' me tied up in his main cabin this mornin'."

"You mean they've done about the same to him that they tried to do with you?" asked Ballard.

"I'd say so. That's why Hutt was so took aback when you said you'd talked with Marsh. Made Hutt scared—he thought for a minute you was tellin' him the truth, and he was afraid that Marsh had got away, killed the skipper, and made off up here."

"Was Marsh friendly with the skipper and Hutt?"

"Seemed to be—until he disappeared some time durin' the night. Last I saw of him, or heard of him, was when he was on deck last night with Grafton. They whispered a lot when they thought I was below in my bunk. I knew somethin' was goin' on that was under cover, but I couldn't make out what it was they talked about so much by themselves."

"What happened after they finished their secret conversation?"

"Along toward mornin' the course of the schooner was altered, and she was run in for that little bight in your island where she lays now. When I woke up this mornin' I could hear 'em kedgin' in with a pair of anchors. I got myself into my duds, and was just finishin' my shoes when Grafton popped in on me and put a gun to my head.

"I asked him what he was a-doin' of, pointin' a gun at me like that, and without givin' any answer, he grabs me and pins me over into my bunk.

"Well, I give him as good a fight as I could. I looked to git shot, but I saw after a while he didn't want to finish me off. He tied me and dragged me out in the main cabin and said I knew somethin' that I could tell him, and he intended to make me cough up."

"Something about what?"

Ross shook his head in utter helplessness.

"That's where I'm done. Don't know what he was drivin' at. Said I'd been spyin' on 'em all the way from Amoy."

"That was a funny thing for him to say, when Marsh had been spying on you."

"That's what I thought. Well, they tied the schooner up to some nipa palms and warped her in, quiet. They covered her sides with brush—guess you saw that. Put the native crew below and secured 'em, and dragged me out on deck to swing me down from a hatch coamin' into the hold, with irons on me, till I'd talk, as Grafton put it."

"Where was Marsh all this time?"

"That's what I don't know. They said somethin' between 'em, Grafton and Hutt about how he was tied up. That may all be a blind."

Ballard lighted a cigaret and pondered the matter for a few minutes. Ross apparently had reached the end of his story, for he had nothing more to say.

"And you don't know, then," asked Ballard, "what all this is about—why Grafton acted as he did, why Hutt is chasing to kill you, and why this man Marsh spied on you?"

"Not more'n what I suspect—that they're up to some crookedness with that schooner, and think I'm in the know of it. That's what Grafton must have meant by sayin' I had to *talk*—he wanted me to cough up how much I knew about the game they was at. So I was between top stone and bottom stone—if I didn't admit I knew anything, they'd kill me as a liar, and if I did admit anything, they'd kill me anyhow to shut my mouth. They wanted to find out how dangerous I was—me, a sick old man, in the hands of that lot of cutthroats!"

"But you were not in this schooner when Marsh was watching you in Amoy—in your ship-chandler's shop. So it must have begun before you took passage in the schooner."

Ross was confused at that pointed fact which Ballard presented. The old man rubbed his palms together, and let his eyes wander out over the land in front of the house.

The rain had been gradually falling off in force, and now there was only a slight drizzle with a brightening of the skies that promised sunshine again before the night came.

"I can't make head nor tail of why Marsh was watchin' me at Amoy or in the schooner. All I wanted to do was to git to S'pore. I paid my way. And then this gang begins to abuse me, and winds up with tryin' to kill me. You look out for 'em—special for Cap'n Grafton—he's a bad egg. Worse'n Hutt. It's the skipper that wants to do for me, because he wants to hide at this island for some game, and he's mortal afraid I've told you about it a'ready.

"That's what Hutt shot at me for, and that's what they'll git you two young gents for—you know too much. And I'll take my oath on it, I don't know what them hellions are up to, traversin' around tryin' to spike me with a bullet. I just want to be let alone—and I'll go on the beach, if I have to."

"We'll see that you don't go on the beach, for the simple reason that we don't allow beachcombers on Nyata. Beyond that, we wouldn't take any special pleasure in seeing a man like you enduring hardships."

"You been mighty good to me," said Ross.

"We've tried to be, and we hope to go on in the same way. And for that reason I intend to be frank with you now. And I'm going to ask you a most pointed question: Why did you tell us you were mate of the *Tamil*, and why did you say she had come into the bay and then gone up to the other end of the island scouting for sandalwood?"

Ross threw up his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"I—I had to lie, or thought I did. I felt pretty sure that if you knew I was in this mess, you wouldn't take me in, and what I wanted was a roof over my head, some chow, and a chance to think what I could do next."

"That's reasonable enough," admitted Ballard. "But don't you see what a jam you got us into? You seemed to be protecting the very people you needed protection against."

"I see it that way now, yes," said Ross, very crestfallen and plainly feeling cheap.

"And when you made inaccurate statements, they were to the advantage of this Captain Grafton, and his mate Hutt. You were shielding them from the truth, while they were doing their best to kill you."

"Yes, that's right," said Ross wearily. "I made a mistake, that's all. But I won't be any more trouble to you two gents. I'm a broken-down old man, and if you don't mind, I wish you'd let me take my duds and go down into the native village and wait for some ship that'll take me off——"

"No, you're going to stay here," said Ballard firmly. "I've been frank with you in this matter not to make you feel like a dog, but to show you where we stand and how we want to help you even after you've attempted to mislead us."

"But I can't stay here all the time, as your guest, and loaf it," protested Ross.

"You won't have to. We'll give you a stake of money and send you where you want to go. And there'll be a coast guard cutter in any day."

He turned to Ross as he ended the last sentence.

The old man drew back with a cringing air, shocked.

"A coast guard cutter!" he gasped. "You—you ain't goin' to have me arrested?"

"No, no!" Ballard assured him. "Don't fret about that. I mean that if the schooner has not got away by that time, Captain Grafton'll have to explain why he came in here."

"I suppose so," said Ross weakly.

But he had no enthusiasm for the thought of a cutter. He seemed, rather, to be in terror of the prospect.

"You'll be a valuable witness against Captain Grafton," went on Ballard. "You'll want to tell your story to the coast guard officers, of course."

"Of course," said Ross.

"Then they'll take you back to some port where you'll be taken care of. So give up the idea of going on the beach here. Just stop fretting and leave the business to us; we'll settle it."

"I guess you're right," said Ross. "You know what's best to do. But the cutter'll have to be here pretty soon—or Grafton and Hutt'll most likely get away."

"They may."

"When does the cutter get in?"

"Any day now—at least, within a week. In the meantime we've got to keep good watch so that Hutt and his skipper don't interfere with any of us."

"And you'd better keep out of sight," suggested Ogden.

"I'll do anything you say," said Ross. "But if I stick my nose out of the house, I'm liable to get picked off with a bullet out of the brush. If I might make a suggestion—could you let me have a revolver?"

"Yes, I'll see about that," said Ballard as he stood up. "But we've got to attend first to having the house watched by our natives. We'll be back in a few minutes."

With a gesture to Ogden that was a signal, Ballard moved out on the veranda, followed by his partner. The two planters went to the back of the house and under a little sun and rain-shelter, where they could talk privately.

"WHAT do you think of it now?" asked Ogden, as he stood so he could look out over the open garden and see down toward the beach. The rain was over, but the jungle was still dripping. The lowering sun, red as fire, showed its upper half over a glowing cloud.

"He's still trying to fool us," said Ballard.

Ogden grinned.

"Yeah—he's on the lie yet. I saw you got it, too."

"When I handed him that bluff about the coast guard cutter, he got an awful jolt. He's about as eager to meet up with some coast guard officers as he is with the —— himself."

"That certainly was a slam in his slats," agreed Ogden. "I could just feel him cave in, and his backbone turned to jelly."

"He certainly is a prize puzzle to me."

"How do you dope it out, anyway?"

"The best I make of it is that he was in on some deal that was cooked up in Amoy, some crooked deal with the schooner gang,

including this Marsh he talks about. Something went wrong in their plans, and he probably balked or got cold feet, and the schooner skipper and Hutt want to kill him off. They're either afraid he'll give 'em away, or there's some loot to be divided, and now that they've got where they're ready to get their hands on that loot, they want to shut him out of it."

Ogden bent his head and wrinkled his forehead in thought.

"That's all right as far as it goes, but we come back to the same proposition we had before. Why didn't Grafton kill Ross on board the schooner? What was it he wanted him to talk about? If they had to make him talk, he knows where the loot is, but has backed out on telling. Now that he's slipped through their fingers, they want to kill him, knowing he holds the secret that brought 'em here."

"That's plain enough," said Ballard. "At least, I don't see how anybody could make anything else out of it. The whole thing appears to be an open and shut proposition, but we know this country well enough to take nothing for granted. This isn't civilization, where things are cut and dried—*anything* can happen here, and we know we can't bank on what seems to be the only logical and reasonable solution. If we always did that, you know how long we'd last on this job."

"There's only one thing to do when we're stuck like this," said Ogden. "And that is, when we're sure we know the meaning of anything, abandon the sure theory for a time, and open our minds to something that sounds plumb crazy."

"All right, let's drop the sure solution you handed out about Ross coming down here on a loot hunt and then getting cold feet with the schooner crowd and refusing to come through with his information. Just say, for the purpose of getting a fresh angle on the thing, that we don't believe the loot theory at all, good as it sounds."

"Done," said Ogden. "That clears the road to start on a fresh track. Have you had any other little hunch?"

"I've been too busy handling Ross and Hutt, and doing the talking. That's given you a chance to do a little thinking on the side. And I know from the look in your eye that you've got something up your sleeve that you haven't handed out. I could tell it when you spoke to Ross sharply—I knew you had a purpose in roughing him a little."

"Yes, I did," said Ogden. "But I tried to hide it from him and make him think I was just a little mean. That threw him on your mercy and kindness, so he felt he couldn't deal with me at all. He's crafty, that bird, and he thought that if he could work you with a smooth story, even if I got mad with him, you'd hold out against me.

"The crook never likes to deal with two or more persons when he's on the grill with questions, or is trying to put something phoney over. Strangely enough, the smart crook can fool six men asking him questions without any definite line for the questions, where he can't cope with one man following a plan in the questioning. That's why I let you ask all the questions with both Ross and Hutt. The one thing to avoid in this thing, is split command—they are forced to deal with one man."

"That's the dope," said Ballard. "But while I took and held the lead, I can't see everything or think of everything while I'm talking and fencing mentally. You've been busy too—and what did you make of it?"

"Have you thought that this may all be a blind for us?"

"How do you mean? How could it be a blind?"

"That there's no row at all between that gang on the schooner and Ross."

Ballard whistled softly and stared at his partner.

"That *is* a new idea!"

"May not be worth a two-penny bun, but it's a good thing to practise on while we're working out this puzzle."

"Then how have you worked it out in your mind?"

"Grafton and Hutt want to be left alone for a couple of days or more, over in Cañon Bay. What for, is the big question."

"If we had the answer, we'd be on sure ground," said Ballard.

"Well, let's never mind sure ground, but work from a slippery framework that may let us fall through any minute—or give us a good lead to the secret. First, we've got to reason out why Ross has lied to help the schooner gang—and he has done that."

"And he hasn't finished yet," said Ballard. "The one thing that gave Ross the pip was my talk about a coast guard cutter being due."

"Exactly!" said Ogden. "That fits my new theory. He wants Grafton and Hutt

to get away with the schooner, and Ross intends to get away with 'em."

"You've just about struck it!" breathed Ballard.

"They all knew when they slipped into Cañon Bay with that schooner, and changed her name, that the one big danger was being seen by us. What did they do? Simply took the bull by the horns and arranged matters so we couldn't miss 'em after they got tucked away."

"Then you think they arranged it so the crosstrees would be visible to us through the bush—and we'd go over on a still hunt to investigate?"

"Very likely. That may have been the dodge. Anyhow, they wanted to fix things so Ross would be in our bungalow, where he could keep watch on us—and throw us completely off the track. You'll notice how much pains he took to warn us that Grafton and Ross were dangerous men.

"That keeps us close to home, and we don't go snooping around to watch this Hutt bird and his skipper. In the meantime, Ross has a first-chop chance to know what we think, what we're likely to do, and gain time for whatever it is that Grafton and Hutt want to do."

"Say, you've just about got their number!" said Ballard. "The whole thing was a first class game played for our benefit. And it was intended that Ross should escape from the schooner as he did—and they probably knew all the time we were watching, so they staged a smooth little play to boob the pair of us."

Ogden laughed lightly.

"I may be wrong, but one thing I am sure of, and that is this: Hutt is a rotten shot."

"What has Hutt's shooting to do with all this?"

"Not much, maybe. But he could have hit Ross when that shot went over the sill of the *kajang*. Ross almost had his nose in the muzzle of Hutt's gun. And why did Ross go and stick himself up from behind that sill for, if he knew Hutt was such a deadly snake. I'd say the whole thing is cooked up."

"It's a blooming sight better theory than the other one we had, anyhow."

Ogden shrugged a shoulder.

"If it doesn't hold water, we'll watch and see how things work out. And we've got to mislead Ross a little as to just where we stand. Also, we mustn't get too strong for this theory of mine, or we'll likely stub our toes. We've got to keep an open mind—and our ears to the front."

"What do you think we ought to do next?"

"Lay low and watch Ross. Make him think we're not going to do anything but wait for that coast guard cutter. But I don't believe that we'll have to work overtime watching Ross."

"Why not?" asked Ballard in surprize.

"Because Mr. Ross is going to depart from hence, as the college professors would say."

"What are you driving at?"

"I've a hunch that Ross 'll skip us tonight."

"But where'll he skip to?"

"Back to his schooner friends. If he goes, it's a pretty fair warning to us that they don't need more time. If he does skip tonight, something may be pulled off after dark—and we've got to know just where Mr. Ross goes and what he does."

"We can't let him get away," said Ballard.

"No, we can't. I'll put a couple of native boys on the veranda tonight, or in the jungle close at hand, and have some of our best jungle trackers on the job."

"And we'll not stop Ross from going—I see."

"Certainly not. Make it easy for him to slip away. Put him in the room off the living-room, where he'll have about three places to slip from, and let the thing work out. Don't let him think we mistrust him—and he'll walk into the trap, or I'm a goat."

"Ross is the key, right enough," said Ballard. "Of course, one of us could hold him here, while the other went over in the jungle near the schooner and watched. That would prevent him from tipping off Grafton on how the land lay with us."

"Well let him do the work," said Ogden. "All we got to do is follow his lead—and if we do that, we'll be in the know before sun-up in the morning or I'm a goat, a goat with whiskers."

"Got any idea what it is they're up to?"

"I'm not so sure. Anyhow, I haven't worried. We'll let Ross work the thing out for us. It's simpler, and I'm a lazy guy, anyhow. There may be some of our natives in cahoots with the crowd. There's a lot going on under cover with the strippers, as I

said today. And did you notice one other little thing?"

"What's that?"

"Ross wanted a gun. Maybe he'd like to plug one of us, eh? Or both of us. Be a simple way to remove the white planters from Nyata, wouldn't it?"

"Simple and cheap," assented Ballard.

"Tonight's the night, something is ready to crack open. Keep your fingers near your gun, and the gun loose and slippery."

They winked at each other and returned to the bungalow.

IT WAS about half past one o'clock in the morning when Ogden, awake and listening in his room while Ballard slept, heard a movement of the flooring out in the front living room of the bungalow.

With his ear to the woven bamboo wall, Ogden heard somebody sneak out into the living room and move about with soft and careful tread, and then come back into the narrow hall that ran between the sleeping rooms.

It was Ross prowling about. There was no mistake about it. He had left his room, gone out into the front of the house, and after a few minutes' delay, returned again to his bed.

"I'll bet he's flashed some kind of a signal to somebody watching from the ridge," whispered Ogden to himself.

He waited a few minutes, not wanting to disturb Ballard, who was sleeping in the room next to Ross on the other side of the house.

The planters had split the night into watches, and Ballard had gone to sleep at midnight. The verandas on all sides were being closely observed by natives concealed in the jungle, so it was impossible for anybody to slip through a *kajang* to the veranda and get away.

The moonlight outside was brilliant. It streamed in through the two *kajangs* in Ogden's room, and on the side of the house occupied by Ross there was heavy darkness. He had been purposely put on the dark side in order to give him every opportunity to get away in case he intended to leave the house secretly.

Ogden himself sneaked out into the front room where he heard Ross snoring gently again. The planter had purposely left some cigarets at the front of the big room near the door, so he would have an excuse to be about during the night if he encountered Ross, or Ross was curious about who was moving in the front room. The packet had been left on a low smoking-table, with a candlestick which was used as a lighter.

As Ogden approached the open door, the low smoking-table stood out in the clear brilliance of the moon, which was all the whiter for the contrasting darkness of the shadowed parts of the room.

The rain had cleared the air and now the moonlight was like liquid silver. It was like something throbbing with life, so palpable was it. It stood out like solid masses that had been molded into irregular and fantastic shapes where it penetrated slantwise through the partly open *kajangs* and the upper part of the wicker door which stood swung inward.

Ogden was in his pajamas. His feet were bare. And before he got within five feet of the smoking-table he made a discovery which could only be apparent to a man cool and keen and with all his powers of observation on a high pitch of alertness.

The candle had been pulled from the candlestick.

Ogden stopped in his tracks, a pistol ready, and listened. He could hear Ross breathing in deep sleep—or what seemed to be sleep—in that room separated only from the living room by a thin partition of basketlike bamboo fibers.

"He's not quit the house yet," thought Ogden. "But he's preparing to go—and what the dickens will he want with a candle on a bright night like this? If he's going to head off into the jungle and go back to the schooner, he won't want a candle in the dark places, because that would attract attention to him. And he won't need a candle in the moonlight.

"Signals? Looks that way. Or does this foxy Mr. Ross intend to leave a short candle burning under a covered box in his room when he slips away, so that within an hour after he's gone, the bungalow will be ablaze and we'll have to turn fire fighters instead of monkeying with his game? I'll say we've got a queer bird on our hands this time, and we need all the wits we've got—if any."

He dropped his pistol into the side pocket of his pajama jacket and lighted a cigaret, making far more noise and light than was necessary. His purpose was to see if Ross would wake up and make any inquiry, or would go on pretending he was asleep.

But Ross continued to breathe heavily and regularly, with an occasional tiny snore.

"He didn't bite that time," mused Ogden, again in darkness and his cigaret glowing. "If he happened to be really asleep, I'd have waked him. But he isn't asleep at all. The trouble with his fake sleeping is that it's too darned good to be true. Our Mr. Ross is playing possum nicely."

Without further ado Ogden returned to his room and pulled the string which he and Ballard had arranged between their rooms for the purpose of transmitting warnings secretly. The other end was fastened to Ballard's pillow, and a couple of jerks informed Ballard that something was afoot which needed their combined attention.

Just at that moment there came the low call of a night bird from the jungle—the warning which the watching trackers were to use if Ross was discovered outside the bungalow or on the veranda.

"Good!" breathed Ogden. "I was just in time!"

There was an answering twitch of the string which lifted Ogden's pillow under his hand.

"And he woke up in time to hear that call from the jungle," thought Ogden.

He heard now the slightest rustle of the flowering vines along the side of the house where Ross had his room—the same side where Ballard was.

At first, Ogden supposed that Ballard had gone out on the veranda in response to the call of the "bird," having at once suspected that Ross was already out of the house.

But it was not Ballard moving the flowering vines outside, for he came quietly into Ogden's room the next instant, fully dressed except for shoes and coat and headgear.

Ogden, sitting in a chair in the moonlight under one of the open *kajangs*, motioned Ballard to him, and presently whispered into his partner's ear the news of the missing candle.

"And," went on Ogden in a barely audible whisper, "he thought he could cover the noise of his movements out on the veranda while I was sneaking back to my room, so he took the chance and has flown the coop. That's why we just got the signal call from Itek—and I don't hear any more of Mr. Ross's fake sleeping from his room."

They remained still for a few minutes, listening.

In a short space of time Ballard went to the door of Ross's room, and scratching on the rattan, whispered—

"Mr. Ross! Oh, Mr. Ross!"

But there was no answer.

Ogden joined Ballard, bringing an electric flashlight. They entered the room, and under a circle of light cast by the torch, they found proof that Ross had laid careful plans to deceive them.

"Look!" whispered Ogden, as he threw the light on the bed. "He wanted to keep us quiet as long as he could after he'd gone, and he fixed things so, in case we looked in on him, we'd be fooled."

Ballard examined what was in sight under the glare. Ross had arranged a dummy for his bed before he departed. Seen from the door, it would look as if Ross was still in bed, for the long bolster which ran from the head of the bed to the foot—the "Dutch wife" of the tropics which protects a sleeper from drafts which will chill him in the cool of the night when he is covered only with a sheet—had a roll of blankets on its far side. And the pillow had been arranged so it would look like the head of a sleeper.

"He got the extra blankets from the camphor chest and rigged this up for us," said Ogden quietly. "And that's what he wanted the candle for—to be able to see what he was doing and how it would look in candle light from the doorway on this side."

They looked about the room with the light, but there was no sign of the stub of candle which had been taken from the candlestick of the smoking table. It seemed natural enough that Ross would take something to give him a light, but what puzzled them was why Ross had not taken stick and all.

"No sign of a candle—or candle grease," whispered Ogden, taking care to keep the glare of his flashlight from being thrown against the *kajang* and so making a beam of light out into the darkness which would reveal to Ross that his ruse was discovered.

"He took that candle with him, and I don't believe after all that he used it in this room. For the life of me I can't figure out what he wanted a candle for when——"

There came a cautious hissing sound from Ogden's room across the little hall. The house, where they saw the figure of a native

outlined in the open *kajang* with the moonlight behind him.

"What is it, Itek?" whispered Ogden in Malay. "Where is the *pen-chari-an?*"

"He has gone on the trail for the windboat, *tuan,*" replied Itek, that being his idiom for a sailing vessel. "And Kapak is on his heels. If you wish to follow, I am ready to take you into the jungle, though the witches and wizards are abroad in moonlight like this, and we may see Sheitan himself."

"We shall follow you, Itek. Have no fear of the evil spirits of the night. If Sheitan should appear, do not concern yourself with him. He only dares frighten old women. We have a powerful charm against him, and he can do you no harm."

"That is good, *tuan,*" replied Itek. "I do your bidding, as I have done before and always shall. Follow me, masters."

They slipped on rubber shoes, took oilskin hats for they knew the jungle would be wet after the soaking of the previous day, and when they had supplied themselves with plenty of ammunition for their automatics, they strapped on their guns and slipped out through the back of the house.

ITEK vanished into the jungle. The two planters went to the point where he had disappeared, and found him waiting for them.

The Malay led the way along the narrow trail, making no more noise in pressing through the bushes than a snake. From time to time he stopped and waited for them to come up with him, keeping constantly in touch. Now and then he made a sortie ahead and got in touch with Kapak, then dropped back again to make sure that his masters did not progress too speedily.

The trail which Ross was following was taking him slowly in the direction of Cañon Bay.

There was nothing for Ballard and Ogden to do but keep on slowly. Itek and Kapak, trained from childhood to secret jungle tracking, had no difficulty in knowing every minute exactly where Ross was.

Kapak could get within three feet of Ross and remain with him as he made his way, while Ross was totally unaware of the presence of any human being in his vicinity. Kapak never moved except in unison with Ross, so that every sound which Ross made covered any possible noise made by Kapak when he moved. But Kapak had an amazing facility for moving silently.

The jungle trail was dark, except for places where the moonlight, striking through the overhead vines and tree-tops, latticed the leafy world below with a filigree of light.

The bush was wet and the ground soft, which made it easy, in some ways, to push along through the foliage silently. And the jungle was filled with drippings of water so that the cracking of a dead twig underfoot or the rustle of the leaves in pushing past them, did not betray the progress of the planters.

They had been out about half an hour when they found Itek waiting for them at a spot where there was a bare place ahead on a side hill that lifted to the ridge which concealed the schooner on the other side. At this point there was a trail that joined at right angles, cutting off toward the sea for low and swampy ground.

Itek reported.

"The old one has turned to the sea."

"By George!" whispered Ogden. "Ross has lost his way to the schooner! He's taken the wrong trail to bring him over into Cañon Bay!"

"I don't see how he could possibly be mistaken on how to get over into the bay," said Ballard. "He knows the schooner is on the other side of the ridge, and he surely is aware of the fact that he has not crossed any high ground or climbed any hog-back. How can he be fooled into heading down hill for the bad lands on the sea side of that low swamp?"

Ogden thought a minute.

"We may be all wrong, of course, on what I've doped out. It's likely that Ross never intended to go back to the schooner at all—and that puts us up a tree."

"I'll say this turning off on the sea trail puts a crimp in what we felt pretty sure was the straight tip," admitted Ballard.

"I think I know what this new dodge is," said Ogden. "You know those long broken furrows of volcanic rocks at the edge of the sea side of the swamp. There's a quarter of a mile or so of 'em, all overgrown with vines, so the rock ridges have become ridge poles for tents formed by the vines—that place we call the caves."

"Sure! I know what you mean."

"That's about where he's heading."

"But what the dickens is he going to that

place for at this time of night?" asked the puzzled Ballard.

"He's going to meet somebody there, that's what! Maybe Captain Grafton or Hutt, or both of 'em. That would be safer for Ross, in case he was followed, because it would throw sand in our eyes."

"Maybe you're right—it's for a parley."

"Looks that way to me," went on Ogden. "Grafton and Hutt probably hid out on this side of the ridge, and Ross knows where to meet up with 'em. And that's what he wanted the candle for—to find his way around in the mess of caves formed by the vines, or to show a light to Grafton and Hutt could pick him up in the dark. A man might get lost in that morass easy enough, but he could show a light inside one of the caves without any danger of the light being seen from the bungalow."

"All right, that little idea sounds good to me," said Ballard. "Let's push on—we want to be around when Ross meets that schooner gang, and maybe we'll be able to get near enough to hear 'em talk."

They pressed on after Itek, who at once swung into the side trail which Ross had taken. Now the jungle was not so dense overhead, and they had to pass through patches where the moonlight broke through in chunks of brilliance. When possible, at such open places, they worked themselves into the brush on each side and got round the dangerous spots, or waited until Itek reported that Ross was safely out of sight ahead.

The trail did not go into the swamp, which was filled with impenetrable mangroves for a wide belt between sea and land. It was useless to attempt to fight through such a barrier and flounder in mud with consequent racket. So they swung off on a loop that headed them for the bungalow, skirting the edge of the swamp to higher ground where they could get to seaward in better bush.

When they struck the outer edge of the rising ground, there were times when they had a view out over the morass of mangroves, shining under the moonlight. Now they could hear plainly the beating of the surf, a sound which masked to some extent the noises they made in beating through vines that grew athwart their way.

Before long they were able to make out the vine-blanketed furrows of volcanic rocks heaved up on their edges centuries before by some tremendous pressure from under the sea floor.

Of course, the rocks themselves were invisible, but their ten-foot high ridges were joined by looping vines, and this carpet of thick greenery presented an upper surface which looked like the swells of an undulating sea. And this irregular carpet roofed the long furrows, forming vine-tented passages on each side of each furrow.

Now Itek came slithering along toward them, on the back track to warn them that Ross had stopped somewhere ahead. But before the native could get close enough to make his report, Ballard and Ogden knew that Ross had reached his destination, or was close to it. For a great flock of fruit bats rose from the end of one of the vine tents on the sea side, and came whirring overhead.

They made squeaking sounds like rats in a panic. These huge fruit bats inhabited the caves, hanging head down from the vines in the caves. By this time in the morning they had fed to repletion on wild fruit and had returned to their coverts.

"Those bats out in the open prove that Ross has gone into one of the vine caves," whispered Ogden, as he pointed to the spot where the bats came flying out in a long line like bees routed from their hives. "If we work down to the beach, we can get into a position where we can see the entrance to the place Ross has gone into."

"Wait!" cautioned Ballard. "There's a light flickering under the vines! See it? Ross has lighted his candle inside a cave!"

"I get it!" said Ogden. "And I'll bet Grafton and Hutt are in there with him. Come on! We'll get to the water!"

They hurried to get round to the beach, and in fifteen minutes were in the wet sand of a sea marsh close to the surf line. From here they could see the open end of the cave into which Ross had disappeared.

The bats were still floundering about in the brush, and terns and swallows from the stone caves on the side of the cliff were beginning to fret and send out scouts to see what was causing the disturbance among the bats.

"We'll wait until he comes out," suggested Ballard, as they kept to cover in thick brush at the edge of the marsh.

Both Itek and Kapak were with them now, having been ordered not to cross the

open and moonlit beach before the entrance to the cave where Ross had gone. Not being straight in front of the opening, they could not see inside of it, but they were satisfied to be able to watch the exit.

"We've got him placed now," remarked Ogden in a whisper, "and we can afford to wait and see what happens."

"I wonder what——"

A snake-like hiss from Itek warned Ballard to silence. The jungle man was on the alert like a pointer which has lined a covey of birds.

On hands and knees Itek and Kapak, kept their heads in the direction of the upthrust ridge beyond which the schooner lay. But not in that quarter, nor any other, could Ballard and Ogden see or hear anything suspicious. But they trusted the trackers and kept silence.

Finally, thinking that Itek had been mistaken when he had hissed for caution, Ogden moved nearer the Malay to ask what it was that was holding his attention over on the ridge. But Itek pressed him back with a silent hand. Ogden, knowing that the jungle men had keener senses than any white man, did not persist in getting any closer.

In a moment Itek and Kapak exchanged signals by means of a clicking sound with their teeth. And in the shadows, Ogden saw the bodies of the Malays draw into a tensity which told that they had located without doubt the mysterious thing on the jungled sides of the ridge.

Ballard and Ogden heard a cautious rustling—and presently the figures of two men became visible as they lurked along the edge of the jungle.

They came skirting the rim of jungle foliage, which broke into a wall at the beach sand in a line as clearly defined as if the island forest had been trimmed by a gigantic mowing machine.

The lurkers came forward warily, making straight for the entrances to the vine-covered caves.

"Captain Grafton and Hutt!" breathed Ogden. "I told you they would meet Ross here! Now we know that Ross has been standing in all the time with the very people he pretended to be running away from!"

The wavering rays of a lighted candle appeared inside the vine-roofed passage. The four watchers hidden in the marsh saw the gigantic and distorted shadows of a man fall across the sandy floor near the entrance to the cave.

The man was Ross.

In a few moments the light of the candle disappeared into the far recesses of the cave. And as it receded, Captain Grafton and Israel Hutt advanced boldly for the opening.

"Say! That pair don't act as if Ross was expecting 'em," said Ogden after a minute. "It looked so at first, when they stepped out into the open, but that boldness was just because they knew they were out of sight of Ross. Now they're more careful as they get up closer."

It was apparent now that the two men were not acting as if they expected to meet an ally at a secret hiding place, as Ogden said. When they got to an open space of moonlit sand, they crossed it rapidly but with careful steps, and crouched in the shadows of bunches of bush that grew out from the caves. And they trod with gentle feet, in spite of the fact that the surf at this point drowned out ordinary noises.

Finally the skulking pair reached the entrance of the place where Ross was hidden. Bats still fluttered about in the moonlight, seeking to reenter their covert, but were frightened away again by the movement and the light inside. To Ballard and Ogden the candle light was invisible, but it was plain enough that the bats could see it, for they flew in, only to come out with warning squeaks again, and make for the jungle.

When Grafton and Hutt had gained the very entrance, they took care not to expose themselves to Ross; instead, they drew up to the entrance from either side, worming their way into the runners of vine on the sand which came down from the top of the rocks. From the protection of the edges, they craned their necks and peered inside.

"No, they are not meeting Ross by arrangement, or they wouldn't act like that," whispered Ballard.

"The wizards in the cave have taken the old man," Itek whispered to Kapak, and the Malays shivered and spat to ward off their fears of night spirits which were supposed to share the caves with the bats.

"Do not worry for these things," whispered Ogden in Malay. "Remember that we have powerful charms against demons."

"Ah, *tuan*," whispered Itek. "I know that this place is well peopled with demons.

My father has told me all about it—and this place is always avoided by our people. We know there are demons here, for my father has seen them. When I was a boy, I also saw them with my father at this very spot, but he made charms here in the bushes, and for a long time no one has seen night demons here."

"Then don't worry," soothed Ogden. "Your father's charms were good."

Ogden began to fear that Itek and Kapak might bolt away for home down the beach at the time they were needed most. He knew the extreme terror of Malays for the spirits which are supposed to roam about at night. So far the two Malays had done well, but it is always difficult to get jungle men to work well out of doors at night, and there was a good chance that the two trackers would be in panic before long.

"Seems funny to me that if Grafton and Hutt were to meet Ross here, he isn't making it easy for them to find him, and with a candle he could——"

Ballard ceased his whispering suddenly, for at that moment Captain Grafton and Hutt, apparently having agreed upon a line of action, both disappeared into the cave.

WHEN Ross had gained but a few yards inside the vine-covered triangular passage under the rocky ledge, he was nearly knocked off his feet by a cloud of bats which took fright at his intrusion.

The great wings battered against his face and their claws scratched him as the evil smelling creatures fought in swarms to get out. He threw himself down prone and waited until the struggling mass had made its way outside into the moonlight.

Then, standing erect once more in the darkness, he lighted his candle. The flickering flame frightened away the last remaining bats which thrashed against the roof of vines in a panic fear, squeaking in terror at the figure of a man trudging into the cave with a naked light.

Ross seemed to know every foot of the way. He bent forward, and with one hand out on the broken wall to keep him from losing his footing on the uneven surface, he hurried deeper into the cavern, stumbling now and then over hummocks of rock sticking up through the damp sand.

His eyes burned with eagerness and he breathed pantingly. Though he had been forced to slow progress on his way from the bungalow by the nature of the tangled trails in the darkness, he had run over the open spots to the best of his speed.

Never had he faltered in his progress through losing his way. The jungle trails apparently were well known to him. Now almost out of breath, he still went on in nervous haste, as if afraid that he would not arrive at his objective in time.

He came to a place where the rocky wall bent away almost at right angles. Here he stopped for a moment and leaned against the ledge, either too spent to go on, or saving his strength for some final effort. He seemed satisfied with what he had accomplished so far, and a smile was on his face. He was streaming with sweat and his cheeks were streaked with the bloody scratches inflicted by the maddened bats.

When he had rested a while, he put the candle down on the filthy flooring of the place, and reached his hands high above him on the side of the ledge.

Feeling for a certain spot which he evidently knew to be there, he drew himself up and dug his toes into a crevice. He reached higher and fumbled above him in among the thick vines. Suddenly he gave a muttered ejaculation of satisfaction as his fingers encountered some familiar object.

He dropped down again. Now he held a rusty tin case. As it shook about, there came a gurgling sound from it, as if some sort of thick liquid was washing about inside.

Taking the tin near the light, he bent over the square case. It had a screw cover which closed one end—a cover about the size of his hand. He worked on the upper edges of the end, and loosened the threads of the screw until the cover turned.

He threw the cover aside and poured the liquid out on the ground. Then, reaching his hand inside, he extracted a black and bulky object which was thick with oil in which it had been immersed. It was a new revolver.

He wiped the loose oil off on his shirt front, took a handkerchief and cleaned the cylinder, cleared the trigger mechanism of the thicker oil which had coagulated in the angles and crevices of the blued metal, and with a string drew a piece of rag through the barrel.

When he had finished these operations, he clicked the revolver. While it worked

a trifle stiffly, it was in excellent condition. Ross heated it over the candle flame just enough to start the thick oil so it dripped freely from the grooves and bearings of the hammer and trigger.

"Good as the day it was made," he whispered. "I'm in fit trim now to handle anybody who wants to run afoul of me, so let Grafton or Hutt monkey with me if they want to. They'll find it an unhealthy business."

He went to the wall again and climbed it. This time he brought down an old tobacco box. He lifted the tin lid and found it full of a white, greasy substance which had hardened. Out of this grease he plucked heavy blunt-nosed cartridges of high caliber as one might pluck plums from a pudding.

He cleaned the grease from five of the cartridges and put them in the chambers of the cylinder, leaving the hammer on an empty chamber. The remaining cartridges he also cleaned and slipped them loose into the side pockets of the jacket which Ballard had provided.

This work finished, Ross picked up the candle and pushed on around the bend of the ledge. His eagerness, instead of being diminished by his success in finding the revolver, seemed to be increased.

The narrow passage broke now into a rounding kind of chamber with its sides overgrown with dead vines which in their upward struggle to gain the sunlight had failed and died. But the lower ends of living vines, heavy and almost like trees, drew their life from the dampness of the sea sand and sent their green creepers upward through the matting overhead.

Ross looked about him with searching eyes. The flooring of the place was covered with dried offal from the bats.

To one side he saw a sort of framework buried under the droppings. It was rounded into a kind of hummock, but he could make out short bamboo poles which held it off the ground. He went over and kicked the side poles.

"The old bamboo bed," he murmured. As if this object gave him his bearings anew, he stepped promptly to the side of the wall nearby and dragged aside some of the vines which ran down over the rocks.

"It's safe!" he whispered gleefully. "It's all safe! Not a soul has been here—native or anybody else. I'm all right!"

He sank down upon the ground as if in a faint, overcome by the stress of his emotions, and put the candle on the filth beside him. For a minute he was content to sit still, while he muttered to himself, tears streaming down his bloody cheeks.

Presently he arose and put the candle in the center of the chamber floor. Again he went to the vines and began tearing them aside to clear the wall.

He revealed now browned and moldering objects that seemed to be a part of the wall, but were revealed as old canvas sacks piled in a tier against the rocks.

Ross patted them lovingly, and took one from the top of the tier. But as he lifted it, the fabric proved to be rotten with moisture and mold, and it broke in his hands.

A shower of yellow disks that glittered in the candle light fell about his feet, tinkling on points of rocks which stood up clear of the litter on the floor.

"You've kept better than I have, yellow boys!" he whispered to the disks that were strewn under his feet. "You're as new as ever, but I'm old and battered and broken. Yes, you've kept, thank God for that! I'll see where I stand now, by heavens! A lot I care if all the coast guard cutters in these waters came looking for me—now that I've got you back!"

His steaming face was alight with happiness. But he gave no heed to the heat and the close and fetid air of the place, which held inside the glow of the previous tropical day.

Without taking off his jacket, he again attacked the tier of sacks and began lifting them down with loving hands. He built them into a hollow square in the center of the cave, enclosing the candle. The wax was almost burnt out, and he knew the light could not last more than an hour or two.

The lower sacks were not so rotten as the top one, and held together in spite of the weight they carried. For he found it a hard tug to get them all from the wall and arranged in the neat square he had formed.

He found satisfaction in the mere handling of them. The sound of their chinking as he dropped them into place was sweet music to his ears, for he talked to them as he worked.

"There's another year of hardship and hunger paid for," he would say as he put a sack in the pile. Or, "You'll rattle again, my boys, where it'll do you and me some good."

There were more than a dozen sacks, and when he had lifted the last one, he sat on the edge of the low wall he had built, with his feet toward the candle, and peered into the flame with smiling eyes.

Ross looked younger now—his vitality appeared to be restored by his exertions. He was a new man, and his very motions were sure and steady and his hands did not tremble nor his voice break in a thin wavering when he spoke.

"I'll sleep better of nights now," he told himself. "I'll be able to do lots of things I couldn't do before, while this was rotting here, and——"

He broke off his words. He had heard something that startled him. He peered about him wonderingly, and his hand slipped to his revolver and he drew it out.

Presently he put the weapon back again.

"Only one of the fool bats stuck in the bushes outside," he muttered. "I didn't hear anything, couldn't hear anything that has to do with Grafton or Hutt or that pair of young planters. I got away from the house safe enough, and they won't miss me till morning. And by that time nothing matters—this morning will be the beginning of a new day and a new life for me."

He did not trouble to pick up the yellow disks which had scattered from that first broken sack. But for all his self-assurance he felt nervous. He was not afraid, but seemed to sense the fact that there were human beings about.

"It's sheer nonsense that anybody is nearby," he told himself. "Of course, I'm lit up—drunk on myself and this gold. No wonder I'm jumpy! I've waited long enough for this minute, and endured enough, to have my heart jumping now that I'm here."

But Ross could not remain inactive. He got up and paced the chamber. He still had a feeling that though he was hidden in the depths of the cavern, others knew where he was. The noises of the bats outside did not disturb him—rather, they were something of a comfort to him in his lonely vigil. No, it was some deeper sense of others lurking about that disturbed him.

"I wonder if by any chance I could have been seen when I left the bungalow?" he asked himself. "Some of the native boys, may have heard me sneaking out and followed me. Or they may have told the planters—or one of 'em might have looked into my room right after I got away, and saw me slip into the jungle."

He determined to make sure that nobody was lurking outside. He picked up the candle and worked his way back around the bend of rocks. Here he blew out the flame and went on in darkness. He approached nearly to the opening, until he had a fairly wide view of the sandy beach before him and the surf line gleaming whitely in the moonlight. He saw nothing suspicious.

"I'm an old fool to be worried," he assured himself. "Not a soul around—native or otherwise. No, I'm safe."

Laughing at his fears, he relighted the candle and trudged back into the cavern again. Now freed of his worries, he returned to the pile of sacks and sat down so that he could watch the passage leading to his chamber.

"Not very long to daylight," he mused. "And then I'm shipshape and Bristol fashion. I can stick it out on this island until Grafton gets out—and he'll give up quick, now that he and Hutt know I'm safe in that planter's bungalow—or think I am. And as for the planters themselves, they won't know where to look for me, even when they find I'm missing. I certainly worked that little game fine!"

He chuckled at his cleverness in escaping unseen from a house where he was supposed to be a willing prisoner.

"Yes, I fooled 'em all right," he went on. "They never had any idea what I was on Nyata for—and it's a sure shot that Grafton and Hutt won't tell. They'll dig out, now that they're sure I'm clear away. It must have been Marsh that told the skipper about me, but how did he know anything? Detective, maybe, for the underwriters.

"That suits me—but they certainly have hung on my heels a long time. If they knew me, why didn't they arrest me? What did Marsh know or suspect that the underwriters didn't know? Well, that's all useless to talk about now. It all worked out in the end better than I could have hoped for, even if Marsh did tell Grafton. Yes, I've fooled 'em all, skipper and planters and the whole lot, and there's nothing——"

He turned his head quickly. A sound which did not belong to the clamors of the bats and birds outside had struck his ear. He knew the sound at once for its full

value—it was the rattle of a loose stone down the cavern. It brought him to his feet with his revolver in his hand.

He listened carefully. But he heard nothing more for several minutes. Still, something convinced him that his fears now were based on something tangible—somebody was behind the bend of rocks and slowly coming up through the cavern.

He looked about him quickly, seeking cover. He thought the situation over for a minute, glancing first at the candle and then at the yellow disks near the wall which stood out of the gloom like tiny yellow stars shining through an inverted black sky.

He made no effort to cover or hide the disks. And instead of blowing out the candle, he left it inside the low walls of sacks and went beyond it into the darker recesses of the chamber some ten feet beyond. Here he hid himself in among a mess of the vines he dragged from the wall.

"I'll have him against the light, whoever he is," he assured himself. "And when he sees the candle, and the sacks, he'll want to investigate farther—and as I get him in the light I'll drill a bullet through him."

He knew he would be out of sight to a person coming round the bend and looking into the chamber, for the zone of light would be between him and the observer. And after being in the dense blackness of the cavern, a man would have difficulty in seeing past the light. It would be necessary to pass the candle and strike deeper into the black pit beyond before Ross would be visible in any degree.

Just as he had reached the conclusion that he had been mistaken about what he had heard, Ross saw a head steal slowly round the corner. A man's face peered in at the candle light.

The man was Captain Grafton.

Then, for what seemed a long time to Ross, Grafton remained in the same attitude. Finally his shoulders came round the bend, and he looked into the far corners of the chamber, attempting to make out the concealed man in the gloom which hung on the edges of the ring of light thrown by the low candle behind the barricade of sacks.

Next, Grafton disappeared back behind the bend. But Ross could hear the captain in whispered conversation with somebody.

Before long Grafton appeared again, coming forward now carefully, a pistol in his hand held before him. Another man was close behind him. Ross recognized the other as Hutt. He crouched behind Grafton and also carried a pistol held warily before him.

They stopped when they had passed the bend of the passage and stood staring at the candle flame and the wall of sacks, then searched through the darkness beyond.

Grafton advanced a couple of steps and stopped again. His eyes had caught the glimmer of the yellow disks. He held out his left hand and pointed to them excitedly.

"I don't see him—he's dug out—on farther up," whispered Hutt.

Grafton looked about again.

"Ross!" he called. "Come on out, Ross! We've got you, and you might as well come out!"

There was no reply. Grafton suddenly seemed to realize just what the sacks represented, for he threw caution to the winds and stepped forward to examine them more closely.

Hutt did not follow, being more wary. He stepped off to one side, being more concerned than Grafton with seeking through the gloom for a sight of Ross.

The mate seemed less sure now that Ross had fled before their advance. Anyway, he was suspicious of a trap. Apparently the pair from the schooner had not yet discovered that the cavern ended here against high ground which was the outside landward limit of the rocky furrows. They evidently mistook the dense gloom in which Ross was hidden to be a continuation of the long vine-covered passage, and supposed that Ross, being without arms, had made his way farther in to avoid conflict.

Grafton bent and laid a hand on one of the sacks. He dug at the canvas with probing finger-ends.

"This is the stuff!" he said in an excited whisper, turning aside to Hutt. "We don't need to chase after *him*—we've got it all, in these sacks—and it's gold specie!"

Hutt, astonished, was startled out of his caution. He drew near Grafton, the mate's thin face twisted against the candlelight as he squinted at the sacks. His eyes were still accustomed to the gloom through which he had come.

"And he's dusted!" went on Grafton, not bothering to whisper now. "He's ahead of us, or has got out through another end of

this long hole. But we'll get him—and then we've got this——"

A thin blossom of flame burst into bloom in the darkness. There came the heavy and thunderous report of Ross' big revolver.

Captain Grafton pitched forward and gave a grunt of agony.

Hutt blazed away, firing at the flash which he had caught out of the tail of his eye.

But Ross fired again—and again.

Hutt screamed and threw up his arms. His pistol fell from his hand. He bent far over behind and for an instant it seemed to Ross that the mate would topple over backward.

But Hutt did not fall backward on his heels. He made a spasmodic jerk forward —doubled until his head was nearly to his knees, and dived upon the prone body of Captain Grafton.

For a minute Hutt thrashed about with his legs, his body twisting and turning while his lips jabbered something. Then he straightened out and lay still.

Both men did not move again.

Ross remained in the darkness for a few minutes more, until the sounds of the last breathing had left the heap lying aeross the sacks of gold. Then Ross pocketed his revolver and walked out of his cover.

He made sure both were dead. He stripped the pistols from their belts and picked up the two weapons they had dropped. Then he dragged the bodies aside and covered them with the vine rubbish he had torn from the walls.

That work done, he proceeded to replace the three empty shells with new cartridges. His fingers were as steady and sure as if nothing of any great moment had happened. He lighted a fresh cigaret in the candle flame and sat down again.

"I guess you got more'n you looked for," he commented in the direction of the dead men. "You thought I'd have to fight with my bare hands—but I showed a claw or two. Well, there's more than one way to skin a cat."

Ross chuckled gleefully and smoked contentedly.

BALLARD and Ogden, remaining hidden after they saw Grafton and Hutt enter the cavern, were startled at hearing some minutes later the muffled report of a revolver—and close upon the shot three more. So close together did the four reports come that they almost merged into one sound.

"By George, they've killed the old man!" exclaimed Ballard. "They simply ran into him and cut loose on him with guns at the same instant!"

"Sure, they've killed him," agreed Ogden. "And he didn't have anything to shoot with."

"Poor old ——!" said Ballard, as they listened for a few minutes. "He's done for—not a sound after those shots, not a yell, not a word."

"Somebody screamed," said Ogden. "And if they've killed Ross, they'll be coming out in a minute. Then they'll have to settle with us, I tell you."

He moved forward to the edge of the brush, toward the open space of sand between him and the mouth to the cavern.

They waited and listened another fifteen minutes. Still no sounds came from the covert. And they saw nothing of a light to indicate that any living man was inside.

There was a great clamor of birds and bats started afresh, for the shots in the cave had roused hundreds of them from the other caverns and the cliff caves. They came swarming out and flew about in aimless circles, squeaking and fluttering at a great rate.

"I'm going to scout that cavern myself," said Ogden. "Hold the boys here until I have a look-see."

"Oh, no," said Ballard. "If you go, I'm with you," and with a word to Itek and Kapak to remain where they were, the two planters walked straight across the sandy stretch and approached the opening of Ross's cavern.

They caught a glimpse now and then of what seemed to be a dancing light. It was far inside, and seemed to be concealed by a projection of the rocky wall. But otherwise the great black tunnel formed on the left side of the up-ended rocks by the vines, was simply a dark hole.

Hundreds of bats had inhabited it for years, and the odors of the place made it especially uninviting as a place to prowl through. And inside there must be Grafton and Hutt, ready to kill again.

"We could wait until daylight," said Ogden. "Whoever is inside, has to come out. And if we get him in sunlight, it'll be easier to handle him. But I'm going in—

I've got to see what's happened, and I will, or I'm a goat—with whiskers."

"All right, I'm with you," said Ballard.

With pistols in hand, they entered, Ballard leading. The vines were high enough overhead on the side against the rocks so it was not necessary to stoop. But the vines fell away in a sharp angle, and six feet from the wall they could not have made their way forward without crawling.

They gained nearly a hundred yards when they came to a sharp bend in the rocks. Peering around it, Ballard stared for a second at the scene before him, and then pressed back to Ogden.

"We have certainly drawn a surprize package," whispered Ballard into Ogden's ear.

"What's in there?"

"Ross is a crazy man, or I miss my guess. He's built himself a hollow square of rocks, has the candle burning in the center of it, and he sits with his feet inside smoking a cigaret and grinning and jabbering away to himself in whispers as if he didn't have a care in the world."

Ogden clapped his hand to his nose in the darkness, almost overcome by the fumes of the place.

"He has been digging up the muck of the floor," went on Ballard. "That's what's gassed you."

"But Grafton and Hutt. Where are they?"

"Search me," said Ballard. "Maybe they shot at him, and then ran away and escaped up through the other end of this place—if there is another end."

"It certainly is crazy," agreed Ogden. "And to think of coming in here expecting to find that old bird dead—and find him alone whispering at a candle in this mess!"

"And what the dickens does he want to dig for—in this place, of all places?" asked Ballard.

"Ask me something easy. What we'd better do is brace the old man and see what he's got to say for himself. He hasn't a gun, or shouldn't have one—and anyhow, he can't have any great grudge against us for following him to this den."

"All right," said Ballard. "Follow along after me and we'll hail him and see——"

"Who's that?"

The challenge came from around the bend of rocks. It was Ross's voice—but not at all the old, cracked and whining voice of the man who had taken refuge in the bungalow after escaping from the pseudo *Timor Laut*.

"He's on!" whispered Ballard. "Might as well speak to him."

"Who's that out there?" demanded Ross sharply.

They heard the dull tread of feet moving over the litter of the chamber, and apparently receding to the farther end.

Ballard edged to the bend of rocks, and holding his pistol ready, answered in the same sharp tones with which Ross had challenged.

"Mr. Ross, we're both here. Ballard and Ogden. We don't want to interfere with you, but there's been firing inside here, and we want to know how you happen to be alive after it—we saw Grafton and Hutt come in."

To their amazement, Ross replied with a burst of hearty laughter. It ran through the cavern and echoed from the wall behind.

"Good!" he cried. "I'm glad you've come. And I've no reason to fire on you two gentlemen, for there's nothing to worry about now."

"But where's Grafton and Hutt?" demanded Ballard, still keeping out of sight.

It came to his mind that it was all a trap for them, and that just as Ogden had suspected, the men of the schooner were in with Ross. The firing was part of a game to draw them into the cavern.

"Both dead," said Ross.

"Look out for him," whispered Ogden. "This is all soft stuff to get us into sight."

"Dead!" gasped Ballard. "But you didn't have a gun!"

Ross fired his pistol through the roof of vines.

"That sounds as if I had something to work with, don't it? And I've got the pistols Grafton and Hutt had besides. No, I'm not trying to fool you—you took me in and fed me and gave me clothes when I was out in the jungle. I'd be a nice sort of dog to want to kill you young men after that. But look out for Marsh—I suppose he's a prisoner aboard the schooner, but he may have been in with Grafton and Hutt and followed after 'em. So take care he don't come in behind you in the dark."

"No fear of that," said Ballard. "We've

got natives outside to cover our rear—plenty of 'em. So if by any chance you are not going to play fair, it won't be healthy for you to kill us."

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed Ross. "Come in, or go outside and wait for daylight, and I'll come out. But I swear I don't want to hurt you two."

But Ballard was not satisfied. He reasoned that if helpless old Ross could turn so quickly into a dangerous Ross—and had a gun to kill Grafton and Hutt—there was something behind it all which was too mysterious to take chances with.

The warning about Marsh was only important if genuine. It might not be true that Grafton and Hutt were dead—that also was important if true. That precious pair were not to be killed as easily as one might slap a gnat out of existence.

"How did you get to kill the skipper and the mate without a harder fight?" demanded Ballard. "Do you mean to tell me that you shot down two armed men and they didn't get a shot at you?"

"Sure I got 'em. I had a gun hidden here in a can of oil. They came snoopin' after me. I left the candle burning, hid out of range of the light, and they walked into it. They made perfect targets—and I'm a fair shot."

"So you had a gun here, eh? Then you've been in here before?"

"Sure. Oh, I know what I'm doing. But I've nothing against you two youngsters, and that's gospel. You did me a good turn. Maybe you think I played a seedy trick by slipping out of your house. But I had my own business to attend to, and now that it's turned out all right, you can have a coast guard cutter come along any time, and I'll be glad to go along with 'em. I'm done with underhanded work—but I had my reasons."

"A cutter! What would you want a cutter for?"

"Now look here, Mr. Ballard," said the old man earnestly. "I can prove that I mean what I say when I assure you there's nothing to be afraid of from me. In the first place, if I wanted to kill you two, I wouldn't admit that I've a gun; and in the second place, my name is not Ross at all."

"What is it, then?" asked Ballard.

"My name is Kenlon."

"Kenlon! Why, that sounds familiar. Are you any relation of——"

"I'm Captain Kenlon of the steamer *Sunda*—out on the reef, there."

"Great guns! But Captain Kenlon is dead. He was killed by his crew, or natives, after the steamer went on the reef."

The old man laughed.

"Yes, I know all about that. But if you're convinced that I'm not trying to fool you, come on in and I'll explain everything. I've waited long enough to tell my story—and now I'm ready. The gold out of the *Sunda* is in here. Here! Wait a minute!"

They could hear him moving around inside. Then there came a shower of something that made a clatter of metallic sounds ringing against the rocks.

Ogden threw on his electric torch and searched the floor of the cave. It was dotted with yellow disks that flashed back the light in a dozen spots. He stooped and picked one up—and gave a cry of astonishment.

"Gold pieces!" said Ballard, as he stared at what Ogden held in his fingers. "The old man's not fooling us about *that!*"

"You guessed right the very first time," came the voice of the old man. "Several sacks of 'em in here—and I'm coming to you if you don't want to come to me," and he walked out into the glare of Ogden's flashlight, with shoulders up, head high, and his hands thrown up in a sign of surrender or peace. He stood before them a man of towering strength, secure and unafraid, his teeth showing in a triumphant grin.

"Come on in and see the gold," he invited. "If you're still afraid of me, reach up and take my gun."

"Oh, keep the gun," said Ballard. "We'll come in and have a talk with you. This stuff about the *Sunda* has us graveled."

The old man led the way in to his pile of sacks and the candle.

"I don't wonder you two gentlemen thought I was a *loco* old man. I played the helpless game for a long time, and was willing people'd think I was a little crazy. Even Captain Grafton, who thought he was pretty shrewd, was fooled. Well, he and Hutt are over there in the brush, dead.

"Just as I made 'em think I was an old fool, I did about the same with you, but you were too sharp for me in some things.

Just the same, I didn't care how much you trapped me in what I said, because all I wanted was a couple of hours loose in the jungle—and I got it."

"But you said you were Captain Kenlon of the *Sunda*. How can that be?"

"Simple enough. I wasn't killed in the *Sunda* at all."

"But all these years since the wreck! How does it come that you turn up here this way, and——"

"That's simple enough too. The gold here was looted from the *Sunda* after she struck. Three men were aboard her who were stowaways. One was not really stowed away, but he had shipped with me as quartermaster. He was the man who put the helm over and ran the *Sunda* on the reef in the night, before the officer of the watch knew anything was wrong.

"The other two stowaways were ready, and jumped the bridge and killed the watch officer. I was asleep in my cabin at the time. Well, they got me—and took me along with the gold out of the treasure room. A lot of specie was being shipped secretly from Singapore for Hongkong, but these chaps must have been in the secret.

"They took me here with the gold, and hid away, and we lived in concealment for more than a year, only prowling out at night for water, and living off cabin stores they brought from the *Sunda*. It had all been arranged that others in the game were to come for the gold with a schooner, but something must have happened to 'em, because they never showed up."

"And what became of the three who held you prisoner?" asked Ballard.

"They got a story out among the natives of the island that this place was inhabited by demons. It worked pretty well, but while the three were out scouting around for that expected schooner and I was tied up in here, the natives killed 'em. Poisoned arrows. One got back to the cave in time to turn me loose before he died. But I had to keep to cover for a long time after that, for the demon hunters among the natives were watching this place pretty close.

"Well, I was in a nice pickle. I'd been kept alive by the three so that if they got caught I'd have to take the bulk of the blame. I'd have had a hard time proving I was not the ring leader. Folks would have said it was a likely story that I'd been held that long—with a lot of gold! I'd have been accused of looting my ship, and then when I couldn't get away with the gold, cooked up a story about how I'd been held a prisoner. Likely thing for a shipmaster to tell.

"But I finally did get away—a sandalwood schooner came in for water and I got away as a shipwrecked sailor. Had plenty of beard by that time, being nothing but skin and bone and whiskers. It never occurred to the skipper of the sandalwooder that I was really a master mariner, much less Kenlon of the *Sunda*.

"I worked my passage to Manila. Came down with fever and was in hospital and at the sailors' home for several months. A little out of my head, too, maybe, but smart enough not to say anything that gave me away.

"I heard some nasty stories about myself—how the underwriters doubted that I'd been killed. Of course, they kept quiet about the gold. The public heard nothing of it or the fact that detectives were on the case. But the yarns were circulating underground through the shipping offices.

"And there I was, a beggar in the streets of Manila and didn't dare tell anybody that I knew where the gold was. If I'd taken the underwriters into my confidence, I'd most likely be in prison now.

"I knew the only way to clear the thing and get back my good name was to get enough money ahead to come down here with a schooner, or pay my passage, and find the gold again and then report. I tried the last plan, but the schooner I got into to work my passage this way, turned out to be a sealer instead of a trader. I got carried to the sealing grounds—and spent two years in a Russian prison.

"When I got out I was sick again in Vladivostok. Nearly died there—and more months of weary hardships and hunger. The war came on and I was bottled up in Vladivostok. Finally, I shipped as a lampman, supposed to be outward for Java. But she was carrying contraband and never went into Tanjong Priock at all. I wound up in a German port, and was stuck again.

"Finally I got to Amoy with money enough to pay my passage here in the *Tamil*—or the *Timor Laut*. Marsh discovered who I was, either before he came aboard the schooner or afterward, and told Grafton—and he tried to torture me out of the secret of where the *Sunda's* gold was.

"You know the rest—but I've got the

gold, and nobody can say now that I wanted to steal it. I've done my best, and it's good enough—this gold can go back to its owners and Captain Kenlon can walk the streets an honest man again—a beggar if necessary—but an honest man.

"You two gentlemen know well enough that if I was crooked, I could have concealed the secret from you even now—I could even have taken a chance on killing you, as I did Grafton and Hutt. And as for killing *them*, I think a shipmaster or anybody else has a right to kill when he's defending what he has been entrusted with.

"Well, this gold was entrusted to me, and I've never turned it over to the proper owners, so I'm still in charge of it. If you were to attempt to take it, I'd kill you, just as I did the skipper and the mate."

"You're perfectly right about that," said Ballard. "And we'll testify that you didn't attempt to mislead us about the gold—that's proof enough that your story is true. Of course, we're astounded to find that you're the skipper of the *Sunda*—and alive—and with treasure. I can see easily enough that your story would have sounded fishy after being a prisoner here so long with the *Sunda's* gold, but nobody can doubt your story now. You've certainly gone through a lot to prove your honesty, and there's not a doubt that you'll be properly rewarded."

"Ain't done yet," said Ross. "We've got to look out for Marsh, and make sure——"

"We'll go over to the schooner by daylight and attend to his case," said Ballard. He held out a hand. "Shake, skipper—I like a man who can keep a trust and stand the gaff as you have, to do it."

Ross shook hands with Ballard, and Ogden thrust forward his hand to the former master of the *Sunda*.

"Say, old-timer, I want to wiggle the paw of your kind of a skipper. I'm pop-eyed, I'm—well, me, all I can say is I'm a goat—and a goat with whiskers!"

Empty Cartridges

by—

Barry Scobee

Author of "Best Bugler in the World," "The Price of a Horse," etc.

DICKER YAUNCY drew from the scabbard under his left arm, the old Colt revolver that his father had used in a last desperate battle against a posse, and laid it on the table in front of him. Then he shoved his remaining poker chips into the middle of the table.

"Anybody that wins this bet," he said noisily, "had better watch out."

The five older men in the game, weary of his continual talking, regarded him in concerted disapproval. One of them was Scott, the richest land and cattle baron in the county, the leader, the settler of

disputes, the unofficial prosecutor and judge, the "boss" of the county.

"Come on, gents, make your bets if I ain't got yuh scared," swaggered the youth. "Me and my gun's restless."

Then he looked up from arranging his chips and perceived their hard eyeing of him.

"Why—why—" he stammered in sudden confusion.

Scott leaned forward over the green-covered table, his stern face flushed, one hand flung out emphatically.

"Boy, you'll have to leave this club," he said.

"What have I done?" protested Dicker shrilly.

"You've finally made an unbearable nuisance of yourself, that's what you've done."

"I was just jokin'."

Dicker swiftly scanned the other men. They showed no friendliness. Scott broke his tense attitude by leaning back in his chair, his measuring regard never leaving the young man. He began to speak judicially.

"This little up-stairs back room has been used for years to loaf and play poker in, or any other sociable game. Any man's been welcome, so long as he conducted himself sober and decent, like any cattleman or cow-hand ought to.

"A couple o' months ago you come in without anybody askin' you. Or so I was informed; I wasn't here. You played poker and lost. You were a little noisy about it, to cover up your chagrin at losin', I reckon. You come again and again, always losing, and always talking more than you ought to, and swaggering.

"Then you got to totin' that old gun o' your dad's in here, like you thought this was an old wild and woolly west gambling place. You thought it looked smart. And tonight you pulled it."

Scott paused as if to choose his way further. Dicker was sullen, smoldering. Scott went on:

"Boy, your grandfather and your father before you were shot by posses—but I won't go into family hist'ry. Suffice to say the county has sort of withheld itself from ye, waitin' to see how you would turn out.

"In the last year theh ain't much to be said in yo' favor. You have been let off of two three ranch jobs 'cause you did yo' work careless. You've done a lot of cruising around, ridin' through the plaza at night firing off that old six-shooter, chumming with a tough drinkin' element, shootin' craps over in Little Mexico, and here recent you've done some rum running."

Dicker was alarmed at this. He got up out of his chair. Smith the druggist and the other men were boring into him. Dicker looked defiant.

"Keep yo' shirt on," advised Scott acridly. "I've been aimin' for sometime to warn ye. Our judge and district attorney live a long ways from here. We only see 'em every six months. But we ain't going to lack law and order as long as I'm around.

"Lately you've been trailin' around with this stranger Batford. He's bad, Dicker. That's the way your daddy used to do, entertain strange men, disappear for a few days, and the next thing we'd hear of would be a train robbery or the like.

"You're tuning up for the same thing, boy. You been totin' the traditions of your dad and granddad around in your mind a long time. Now you're totin' the old gun. It's symbolical. It sort o' stands for what you think was fine in your dad, but what it actually points to is his wrong-doing, his loafing, and sneaking, and treacherous——"

The lash of words whipped the youth to fury. He snatched up the old gun from the table.

"You leave my father alone!" he flamed. "Keep your tongue off o' him!"

Scott lifted up from his chair, his face darkly flushed. The arrogant quality in him that had a way of rising to the surface when he was crossed became paramount. He swayed forward, tensed, his hands spread to seize the gun. But Smith the druggist interrupted.

"Wait a minute," he broke in mildly.

He arose from his chair. Scott halted truculently.

"Let's don't be too hard on Dicker," said Smith in his mild way looking around at them. "We've got to be fair. Sometimes I've thought he would like to keep away from the bad element, men like Batford. I've thought maybe he had a hunch down inside of him, to aim at being a first-class man——"

"Baaaw!" growled Scott. "You don't know the breed like I do."

He turned back on Dicker.

"You listen to me, young fellow, and harken close. You've got to quit your gun

toting and what it stands for—got to quit loafing with suspicious strangers, got to quit that everlasting practice with that old revolver, to be a good killin' shot, for that's what you mean by it; got to quit treading in your father's tracks and making killings likely, and giving our county a bad name—got to mend your ways or leave this part of the country!"

In a climax of arrogance and wrath Scott wrenched the door open.

"Get out!" he bawled. "Get out o' here!"

As if swept by the very blast of the words, Dicker went through the door, and Scott flung it shut behind him.

The effect was as if Scott had shoved Dicker out with his hands. Dicker whirled back.

"I'll kill him!" he sobbed. "I'll kill him!"

With his father's old gun gripped up tight, his left hand went feeling in the darkness for the door-knob.

Then a stillness came, a stillness absolute, inside the building as if those in the room paused, expecting Dicker to return, and through the stillness came a solvent of Dicker's frenzy.

It was the night wind droning in the nooks and crannies and past the door, a low sweet whispering and crooning that enthralled him, that always had enthralled him, whether at his window, among the telephone wires, in the dry grass, or over the rocks—a weakness from his night-loving father, or a gracious gift from God.

Such melody of the wind with its high, pure harmonies had been to him the spirit of dreams and hopes and fine things, had carried him up to the certainty and poise of a strong, good man.

So now he did not give up vengeance, he forgot it; and like a man beholding a vision he strode from the entryway and down the stairs that clung to the side of the building like a ship's ladder, and off into the night.

A HANDFUL of Americans, twice as many Mexicans, and some burros—but no goats nor barking dogs, composed the upland cow-country village. A ridge of rock called because of its peculiar shape, the Sleeping Lion, thrust its forepaws out into the little town and divided it into two parts. On one side were the Americans, on the other the Mexicans, and on the rocky forepaws between the two, looking down on the other roofs, the old Yancy two-room adobe shack.

Old "Gant" Yauncy, Dicker's father, had built here above the town, half outlawed, aloof.

Old Gant had possessed a brooding quality, or contempt, or somber loneness, that had enabled him to keep away from his neighbors and the sins of both sides, except when he was drunk.

This quality did not crystalize in the son. He loved companionship, but sometimes found himself subtiley barred, particularly in the last year or two.

As Dicker's high-heel riding boots stumped along the rocky path up the Lion's paws toward his cabin, resentment begun to return toward Scott. He had been thrown out of the club, or it amounted to that, and it meant disgrace. He stopped with the thought of going back, and in the pause heard other footsteps on the rocky ground. They halted a second later than his.

"Burros," Dicker decided after a minute's listening.

It was dark. He could not see far. He started on. But he was not satisfied. The steps had not been just like four hoofs. He stopped again, short up, and caught the sound of a step or two before the feet could halt.

No burro but a stalker! His right hand went swiftly to his gun. Was it Scott?

Dicker hurried on, resolved to get to his house and lay in wait to see what the easy stepper's game was.

Arrived at his weather-worn adobe he squatted in a black patch beside a boulder, but immediately it crossed his thought to wonder how he was equipped with ammunition, and he remembered something that startled him.

He forgot about the stalker, who must be coming up the hill, and rushed for the back door of his house. In the kitchen with a pocket flashlight he examined the cylinder of his revolver. The cartridges in it had been fired. He had been shooting at a mark in the afternoon and had forgot to reload.

A shocking thought swept him, these empty cartridges, this useless gun that he had been going to shoot Scott with, were symbolical of him—carelessness, and fumbling, and incompetency. It was why he hadn't been able to keep his ranch jobs. It

was symbolical of his foolishness in trying to win the good opinion of the men by playing poker with them when he could do nothing but lose and talk flightily to cover up his chagrin.

It was an illuminating flash in which he saw himself as he knew others must see him. Suppose he had stepped back into the clubroom and pulled down on Scott with the empty cartridges! The thought made him angry with himself. He wanted to slap Scott, wanted to do something to show those mentally compact, certain men, that he was not incapable.

Something of the locseness that is inherent in incompact youth dropped away from him in his self-anger and some of his father's somberness took its place in this moment of change, while grimly he proceeded to fill the old revolver with cartridges that had bullets.

This finished, he thumbed out the flashlight, his thought returning to the immediate environment. A hand rattled at the doorknob. The stalker! He thrust out the gun.

"Who is it? I'll shoot!"

"Easy there," came the rumble of Batford. "What's 'e' matter wit' you?"

He pushed open the door and stepped to the threshold.

"Was that you following me?" demanded Dicker.

"Yeah. You're all tuned up in G. What's eatin' ye?"

"What do you mean, sneaking after me? Why didn't you speak up?"

"Boy," Batford answered coolly, "you're actin' like a pup what's been kicked by the hand that fed 'im and now is wantin' to bite somebody."

"Come in," said Dicker.

He put up his gun and proceeded to light the kerosene lamp. The illumination revealed the man who had closed the door and now stood with his back to it blinking. A lean, tallish figure, slightly stooped, protuberant chin, not unlike Dicker except the stoop. The two wore cow-country clothing much alike.

"I didn't speak to you comin' up," Batford explained, "because I didn't want nobody listenin' in."

"You in trouble?"

An odd flick of an expression passed over the unshaven face. Batford, a stranger and hanger-on around the town for a pair of weeks, had been away the last two or three days. Dicker had taken him in over a night or two and had found him congenial. Now the fellow had altered somehow in appearance.

"You come out of that poker club, Dick," said Batford. "Who all's playin' there tonight?"

Dicker named them.

"Much money goin'?"

"Coupla hundred dollars in sight, I reckon. But they'd have more in their pockets. Scott'd be lined."

"You could use some o' that magic yourself, hey, Dick?"

"What do you mean?"

"Git suspicious, boy!"

"You mean you'll——"

"—hold 'em up!" snapped Batford, his lower lip sliding sidewise crazily.

"Want you to help me—take up the collection while I keep 'em hypnotized."

Exultation leaped fiercely in Dicker. What a way to even up with Scott! With the whole town!

"We can wear handkerchiefs," urged Batford. "And wrap up in blankets from Mrs. Weatherby's clothesline. They won't know us."

It would mean that Dicker could swagger around town with money to blow and everybody knowing how he'd got it but not knowing certainly enough to swear in court. An old trick of Gant Yauncy, such flaunting. Dicker thrilled. The blood of the breed was on the prod. Batford saw the fire in Dicker's face. A similar wild flame was in his own.

"Let's go!" he exulted, hand on knob.

"I got yuh faded, Bat! Wait till I cut holes in my handkerchief."

"Aw, come a trotting. We got no time to flitter."

"What's the rush?"

"A rush all right. I—listen here, kid, I had a run-in with the Rangers. I got to get some money and ride like a horse race for the T. & P. railroad."

The exultation dropped from Batford. He slumped down in a chair wearily, swiping his sleeve across his face. But this lasted only a minute. He was up again.

"Come on, Dick, let's ride."

"Wait."

It had been a policy of Gant Yauncy to keep out of the troubles of other men. It

had won him the reputation of being treachercus and not sticking by his friends. But Dicker knew better; it had been common sense. Gant had stood by friends fair enough when there'd been reason.

"Wait," repeated Dicker, imitating his wary parent. "I got to think about this. What did you do?"

"Done enough."

"Shoot a Ranger?"

"Maybe. Say, do your think stuff fast. And remember you get half o' the loot."

Dicker sucked at the thought of getting even with Scott, with the whole town for looking at him as the son of an outlaw. They'd literally kicked him out of the club, like a dog. But as to getting into Bat's trouble——

"Listen, Bat, I got to think this over. You sit down—had anything to eat? Fry yo' some ham and eggs. Theh's bread. I'll take a little sashay up over the rocks and think about this."

Bat made no answer. His interest was gone, a far-away look on his weary face. He automatically blew out the light. Dicker went out, leaving the man standing by the table.

FROM the shack on the rocky and boulder-strewn forepaws of the Sleeping Lion a path climbed sharply up the shoulder to the wide back. This in turn gave way to a grassy ridge that went for miles, ascending smoothly until it became the side of a grassy mountain. Old Gant Yauncy used to start up this long easy ascent, with its clean winds and stars overhead, restless and bitter as gall and come down at peace with himself.

Old Gant had been a lover of the night. He would take his blanket to some cranny of the grassy mountain and remain awake half the night listening to the wind, or watching the stars, or contemplating the vague and shadowy landscapes. And Dicker had inherited or imitated this trait.

Dicker's thought was muddled when he started out—revenge on Scott, hold-up money, Bat's trouble, the Rangers——

Abruptly, at sight of a boulder beside the trail, his thoughts let go of this muddle. For behind this boulder he had found a little scatter of empty cartridges one forenoon years before, as he rode down the trail. Empty cartridges with the discolor of smoke still fresh on them.

Funny how empty cartridges had bobbed up among the Yauncys, ruminated Dicker as he walked along, climbing now.

Dicker's father had carried two of the metal things, the bullets from which had killed the first Yauncy in this country, old Peter, who had fled from California ahead of vengeance in '49—"a forty-niner going the other way," it had come to be said facetiously.

Old Gant Yauncy would regard those little cylinders, fired back in the eighties, and grow bitter and mutter and spit savagely.

The little pile of empty brass shells that had killed, or helped to kill Dicker's father, had been fired in the year that Dicker was fourteen. The boy had been over to Uncle Fodrey's, he who had a Mexican wife. Fact was, Dad had sent him there to be rid of him for a few days while he and his pardner rode across the country, leaving a relay of horses, to rob the express train.

Returning in the brisk clearness of an October morning, riding down the ridge and the path on the shoulder of the Lion, Dicker had stopped his pony to peer down at the scatter of cartridges, twenty or so, that his quick eyes espied.

He slid from his pony, squatted down, saw the fresh gray of smoke on the rims of the brass sheaths, caught the glimmer of more cartridges farther around in a sort of circling, and felt in sudden fear, that his father's house had been the center of a shooting ring of men.

And even then armed men were burying his father, who had been killed covering the retreat of the partner in the train robbery after their arrival here. The fourteen-year-old Dicker had been sent back to Fodrey, not an actual uncle, because no one else would take him in. After three or four years of haphazard village school, ranch work, knocking about, he had come home to the Yauncy cabin to live, except for the time spent at necessary labor for money to live on.

Dicker, thinking of these things, kept on across the back of the Sleeping Lion and up the ridge. Every time he remembered Bat he shut the thought out. It was pleasanter to feel the sharp wind sliding down the slope than to think of Bat and his troubles.

He stooped and climbed through a wire fence. Cattle were bedded in a little valley to one side. One, then another, and

others, got up. He knew it was past midnight. It had been at least half after eleven when Bat arrived at the shack. He kept on.

At the last point where he could see both the American and Mexican portions of the village on either side of the root of the mountain there was not a light visible. They were peaceful communities.

He himself and a boy or two from respectable families going a bit wild now and then, an infrequent stranger, two or three Mexican youths—these were the disturbing factors. He, with his gun tucked in the scabbard under his arm, was the wildest.

The wind was singing but for the first time that he could recall it was not musical. Many was the time that, like his father, he had laid out all night to listen to the melody, and just to be out of doors. It was like a good friend now forgetting to be a good friend.

Then the questions that he had been shoving back came elbowing him. Should he help Bat with the hold-up? Was he treacherous to a friend if he did not? Should he take the outlaw path definitely and turn against men as they seemed to be against him?

This questioning was suspended in midair. A faint sound was beating up against the acidy night wind. He keened his ears.

"Sounds like shooting," he whispered.

He knew it was shooting. Bat was in trouble.

Dicker started running down the ridge, and what his mind's eye pictured at the place of conflict was empty brass cartridges being scattered on the ground from rifles and revolvers.

A GROWING chill in the clubroom—Dicker learned of these things later on—reminded the poker players that the fire in the cast-iron stove had burned down. Following their custom they cut cards to see who would go downstairs for wood, and the lot fell to Scott, who immediately started out.

"Keep yo' eye peeled for that Dicker boy," advised one of the players. "He might be out practisin' shootin'."

Scott laughed in renewed good humor.

"Maybe I was too harsh on the boy," he said. "But he's old enough now to know better and do better. Way he's doing, though, he's a menace and he's got to——"

He did not finish but the flash of grimness told what he meant.

Scott went down stairs and around to the rear of the store building to the woodpile. As he started back with an armload of wood he caught sight of a shadowy figure on the stairs, and then of a horse tied half under the stairs.

"Dicker Yauncy!" he concluded instantly.

The man passed into the entryway out of sight.

Scott put down the wood carefully, retaining a short solid piece for a bludgeon, and advanced. He arrived at the horse. It was a gray and he recognized it as Dicker's. Put there for a quick get-away, he told himself. He untied the bridle reins and led the animal some distance away, turning it loose. Then he hurried for the stairs.

Scott had no firearm on his person. The players did not ordinarily wear guns. The club had been held up once, in cattle buying season and robbed of a few thousand, and since then the frequenters had kept a pair of revolvers in belts hanging on the wall low down and just behind the chair of one of the players, easy of access in emergency.

A few steps carried Scott to a position out and away from the stairway, so that he could see into the entryway. It was too dark to make out anything, but at this instant the clubroom door was opened and light flooded out so that the man in the entryway was silhouetted. Scott perceived that he had been wrong as to identity, for in the tall, stooped form he recognized the stranger Batford. Scott flung a glance around in the dense darkness, fearing that Dicker also was on hand.

Batford evidently had the drop on those in the clubroom, for he was flourishing a pistol in the room, and there were quick indistinguishable words.

Gripping the stout stick, Scott continued in long tiptoe strides for the stairway and then up it with agility and silence astonishing in a man so big and heavy.

He gained the top and peered past the edge of the doorway. Batford with his back turned was still against the light, just beyond reach. Scott edged forward, got into the entryway, raised the club to strike, and Batford, warned by some undefinable thing perhaps, whirled with a snarl.

Scott ducked. Batford fired. Then Batford, probably fearing that he was hemmed in, leaped over Scott, now down on hands and knees. The leap carried him to the top of the stairs, and another leap sent him over the bannister and out of sight. As he discovered the absence of the horse he flung out an angry oath.

Scott heaved himself up. The other players in the room poured out, the two revolvers from the wall in their hands.

"Come on!" Scott commanded. "You men with the guns, keep on his trail. Don't let him get away. Watch out for Yauncy too."

They ran down the stairway in a row, Scott ahead. At the foot they paused to listen for sounds of running. Instead, the sudden unexpected sound of shots greeted them. To a man they flopped down on the ground. It was plain in a minute, though, that no bullets were coming their way. A duel was in progress out there in the lava-cindery plaza, rather a three or four sided fight. There was a cry or two of "Halt!" then the shooting ceased.

"Hi, out there!" Scott shouted. "Who are you?"

"Rangers!" came the answer. "Bud Milroy. We're after Batford. He killed a Ranger."

"That was him—better hurry."

The Ranger's horse went cantering. Somewhere beyond, Batford was dodging among the scattered buildings of the little town. Scott shouted again.

"Look out for two—Dicker Yauncy."

The two men with the clubroom revolvers set out after the chase. The pursuit from the first took the direction that would lead to the forepaws of the Lion—toward Dicker Yauncy's adobe house.

Scott branched off from the others to go to the home of a son-in-law for a rifle.

The town began to arouse at the noise of the running fight. Lights appeared in windows. Men came running out half clothed, carrying guns.

The fugitive soon reached the boulders on the slope of the rocky forepaws. He had scarcely fired at all in his flight among the houses, but now he had begun to fight in earnest, with a waspish tone of vengeance. Blood on the rocks afterward showed that he had been wounded.

A horse of one of the Rangers was hit. It went down. Scott's voice rose in a roar warning somebody, anybody, to cut off retreat by the path up the Lion's shoulder. Milroy bellowed that he would ride around to the other side, to prevent escape down into Little Mexico. They heard his horse galloping.

Batford reached the Yauncy cabin. He fought, or fired, with a boldness that spoke of desperation and hate. He was inside the house, and outside, and once he dodged off into the rocks, only to be driven back. The citizens kept well among the rocks but their bullets constantly swept the cabin.

It was plain that only one fugitive was firing back. Scott began to inquire about Dicker Yauncy. Had anybody seen him?

Batford's firing ceased abruptly. Word was passed among the posse that the Ranger was going up to the house to investigate. They, too, ceased their fire. Presently a flashlight was seen playing around a window of the structure. There was no answering shot. Milroy was heard to call out:

"You, in there, Batford, I'm coming in!"

He went to the kitchen door, threw it open, and entered, the flashlight revealing his action.

In half a minute he was back outside.

"Batford's killed," he announced in a loud voice.

The men with their guns quickly assembled. Somebody lighted the kitchen lamp. They all crowded in to see the slain man.

"He crossed the river this morning from Mexico with narcotics," said Milroy.

"And shot a Ranger?"

"Johnson, new man. They got Bat surrounded and he fought his way out. Stole horses, and got rides, and hoofed it. When he hit the mountains we figured he was coming back here. I took a chance on coming over from Marpine to cut him off."

"Good thing you did. He mighta got away."

The men filed out of the room, not feeling good at the sight on the floor. They began to ask about the owner of the house. Where could Dicker be? Scott told them about finding Dicker's horse saddled and ready by the stairway. A silence followed. It said plainly that they half-way believed Dicker was mixed up in this affair. But no one seemed willing to voice suspicion.

"I found the horse," a townsman ventured. "He was over by my place. I rode him over here."

"Yauncy left the clubroom not over a half hour before this fellow tried to hold us

up," said Scott. "It's queer where he's got to."

"It's funny," Ranger Milroy declared, "how Batford's been heading this way all day, as if he expected help here. Then when he jumped out of the clubroom he turned straight for this shack."

Scott smacked his right fist into his left palm.

"It's more than queer," he burst out. "It's downright suspicious. His horse ready, too, for a get-away. Dicker's just about at the end of his tether around here. When he shows up again, if he does, he's in for the third degree. And if he doesn't show a clean slate he'll get worse than the third degree!"

DICKER, hurried down the ridge by the sound of firing, did not arrive at the Sleeping Lion until after the popping of guns ceased, for after all, the shooting was of brief duration. Then, instead of descending the shoulder and following the path to his shack, he went out on the cliff that was called the head.

Here the talk below was confusedly audible and the movements vaguely visible—men around the lighted kitchen, some out among the boulders, a horse or two led away, the final leaving of the house in darkness and the carrying of a burden like a body by a knot of men.

"They've got Bat," was Dicker's conclusion.

He felt sick. Batford in trouble and taken at the Yauncy house. It gave Scott another count against him.

He was afraid to go down. Watchers might have been left in waiting to arrest him. Or they might fire on him. The night and the open felt safer, assured him. So, wide awake, he spent the remainder of the night in a fissure of the cliff, thinking, thinking mostly in circles.

Some of the somberness and contempt and bitterness that had been his father's toward law and society arose to the surface in him as he hardened himself for the morrow.

As day broke, he watched eagerly the rocks, and his house, and the plaza. There was no sign of possemen lying in wait, but down among the houses and the store and bank and postoffice, the citizens were astir earlier than usual. It appeared that the poker players, much augmented, had returned to the clubroom after the battle.

Dicker saw them come down for breakfast. He was in no hurry to face them. The sun came along and warmed the rocks, and made him drowsy, and since he had not slept at all in the night he folded his coat for a pillow and went to sleep.

It was mid-forenoon when Dicker was awakened by the hot sun and by the chatter of boys around the cabin. Four men, Scott, Milroy and two others, were going away from the shack. He lazily watched. It was as if the boys had remained behind to investigate for themselves.

They got up courage to push the door open and peep in, then they ran away. After this, Dicker lay on his back and gazed at the blue sky, or observed the people loafing on the porches around the plaza. A good many ranchmen were in town, and some strangers.

The wind got to purring. Without his being aware of the process, it cleared Dicker's thought to a sense of necessity, so that he shook off his laziness and reluctance and made his way down.

As he approached his old adobe house, signs of battle became plentiful. Several of the little window panes were shot out, the old walls were gouged by bullets, and the back door was splintered. Dicker stopped on the threshold, gazing inside. Bloody tracks were on the floor, where Batford had walked about in his battle, and in the middle of the uneven floor a smear of blood, while in a corner, as if dropped there, lay Dicker's thirty-thirty rifle, bloody hand marks all over it.

But what sent a haunting tug of memory through him were the empty cartridges scattered over the floor, many bent from having been stepped on. There were more outside among the boulders, as he found by walking around—little scatterments just as years before when old Gant Yauncy had made his last stand.

"Empty cartridges," thought Dicker coolly. "And there may be some more."

He saw that his gray saddle horse was not in the tumbledown stable. He struck out rapidly down the path toward the little town.

RANCHMEN and others in town had a way of gathering at the pool-hall to pass an hour or two before going to the hotel or little restaurant for dinner. Well aware of this forenoon

practise, Dicker headed for the back room of the bank building.

At least twenty men were present, all watching a pool game between Smith the druggist and a stranger. A hush fell when Dicker stepped inside. The game broke off. Scott heaved up out of a chair and stepped forward. Smith with cue in hand came also.

"You got back, I see," said Scott satirically.

"Haven't been gone," retorted Dicker.

"That's funny. We didn't see you at the little party last night up to your house, an' nobody's reported seein' you this mornin'."

Dicker knew that a detailed explanation was necessary to save him from trouble, knew that Scott would exact it, and it sent hate surging through him against the big, dominant boss of the county, his enemy. Scott sensed the antagonism and it made his arrogant nature, where his authority was defied, rise up and bristle. He flushed and went as hard as rock.

"Well?" he demanded. "Spit it out. Where'd you go last night? How'd this outlaw come to be killed up there?"

"Well!" snarled Dicker, mimicking. "I'll tell you because it's fair I should and not because you can make me do it."

"Look here, son of old Gant Yauncy, don't git fresh!"

Dicker saw red. But with all the power he could muster he brushed his resentment aside to talk.

"Last night after you put me out of the club I went home. Purty soon Bat came up. He said he was in trouble with the Rangers. So I left him in my kitchen and went up on the long ridge to think. When I heard the shooting I came back."

"Fine, full and complete! What did ye want to think about? Did you come all the way back?"

"Stopped in the rocks."

"What for? Why didn't you come down?"

"Because I thought you'd be snorting around. Thought I'd wait till I got good and ready and I did."

"You knew Batford had trouble with the Rangers?"

"He said he had."

"He said he had—did he tell you he'd killed a Ranger?"

"He said maybe he had."

"Maybe! You knew then that he had, knew he was a fugitive from justice, and you didn't try to let the officers know. Why didn't you?"

"Why," answered Dicker in surprize, "I never thought of it."

"Never thought of it—you're pretty well calloused for a kid just old enough to cast his first vote. What did you want to think about up there on the ridge?"

"Bat wanted——"

Dicker checked himself. He did not dare to tell this hostile prosecutor about the proposal to hold up the club.

"Wanted what?" Scott prompted.

"Wanted to get away."

"Wanted what?" Scott insisted. "You said Bat wanted something."

Dicker hated the gouging. He was tempted to spit the facts out in the relentless face. Their hard eyes were clashing.

"Listen, did Bat want you to help him hold up the club?" asked Scott.

At this shrewd guess Dicker flamed inside. But he held back from answering.

"Did he? Did he? Did he?" Scott's forefinger went punching almost into Dicker's face.

"Yes!" shouted Dicker. "Yes he did, and I'd have done it, too, if he hadn't dropped that he was in bad with the Rangers!"

Scott regarded Dicker a moment in taut silence, relaxing slowly, then turned away from him to the men all about them.

"It's come to what I've been expecting," he said. "The son of Gant Yauncy harboring criminals and conniving with them. Men, we don't want any more of what happened last night. We've got to rid our county of bad blood."

He faced back to Dicker, whose palm was itching to close around the revolver butt under his left arm.

"Boy, this county ain't big enough to hold respectable citizens and the gun totin' son o' Gant Yauncy at the same time. You've got to go. I'm giving you notice."

A stir of astonishment greeted the harsh order. Dicker went white.

"Listen to me and don't make any mistake," admonished Scott without mercy. "You leave this county for good, by dark tonight. Start riding and keep on riding and don't you never come back!"

Dicker could not speak. It seemed to him that he would choke.

"Hear me?" thundered Scott.

"I hear you," half whimpered the youth.

Then he flashed out in vicious threat:

"Yes, I hear you! And I give *you* notice —there'll be some more empty cartridges before I go!"

He gave them his back and strode out.

DISTANT from the poker club door a little farther than an ordinary citizen can throw a stone—and this average throw is said to be about one hundred and twenty-five feet—was an outcrop of volcanic rock, common to the region. It formed a little knoll a few feet high with boulders up to the size of bee-hives scattered over it offering concealment to a sniper bent on a shot into the entryway of the club.

Dicker Yauncy, sitting against the shady side of his adobe shack hugging his knees and thinking with all the hate that old Gant had sown in him for some way to avenge himself on Scott, before he should leave the town forever, remembered this rocky place of vantage. If he could get there with his rifle in daylight and get its sights aligned on the doorway for a shot in the darkness, he would be satisfied.

Ordered to leave town! Though three hours had passed since Scott had spoken, it still rankled with unabated pain. A worse thing had never happened to his father, Scott, protector of his county! Dicker spat venom.

He got up from the adobe wall, his thought intent on getting his rifle and ammunition and starting out. Before he could enter the house he was stopped by the sound of approaching steps, and Smith the druggist, leading Dicker's gray horse, appeared on the path up from town.

"Hello, Dicker," Smith called when he had come nearer. "Thought I'd bring you Gray Boy home."

"Reckon you thought I'd want him to leave town on by dark, hey?" sneered Dicker.

But he went up and stroked and patted Gray Boy.

"You had some money coming from that poker game last night," Smith explained, "some chips you hadn't lost yet."

He handed over a paper bill and some silver, and sat down in the shade alongside where Dicker had been as if he meant to stay a while. Dicker resumed his place sullenly.

"Reckon they told you all about what happened last night, when you was eating in the restaurant," said the druggist.

"Yes."

Smith ignored Dicker's sullenness and kept on, observing mildly:

"Henry Scott was purty rough on you, at the club last night, then ordering you out of town."

"He went too far! My dad wouldn't have stood for it."

"Trouble with you, Dicker, is you've been thinking too much about what your daddy would do and wouldn't do."

Dicker lapsed back into his sullenness.

"That old gun o' his that you pack," Smith kept on, "it's typical somehow of the way you've been brashing around and carrying on and imitating your dad in a lot o' things. If you'd get rid of such ideas— I've had high hopes of you, Dicker, but I don't know . . . I've been wondering ever since you started coming up to the poker games at the club, what you was butting in for."

"I'm as good as any man!" Dicker ripped out.

"Ah, that's what I thought was behind it. You wanted to herd with somebody besides the rowdies. You'd like to go to the parties and dances with the young folks down here on the American side of town, and have a steady job, and shake off this old stain of your father's reputation. Ain't I right, Dicker?"

Dicker did not answer. He was marking in the dust with a stone. The gray horse heaved a great sigh, making the saddle leather creak.

"Ain't I right, Dicker?"

"Yes," whispered Dicker.

He gave a side-long puzzled glance at the druggist. Smith kept on with his slow, mild probing.

"What are you figuring on making out of yourself, Dicker? What trade or occupation?"

Dicker slanted another look. Smith seemed all at once like a friend, a father.

"Why," confessed Dicker, lifting from his reserve, "I've thought maybe I could get to be a ranch foreman sometime. That's a good job. Out of doors. I wouldn't like to work inside a store. Maybe I could get to be a superintendent on a big American ranch in Mexico, later on."

Smith was staring encouragingly into space. The son of Gant Yauncy kept on

with his spilling of secrets that had never got out of his heart before.

"I asked Scott for a job a while back. I'd have tried hard to make good. But he said no, not with me totin' a revolver, or doin' what it stood for. So I went to playing poker to show him I was as good as any man and didn't need his job.

"I got to thinking things over last night, Mr. Smith, where I was laying out in the rocks with the wind blowing. I've been trying to get away from rowdies all right, I reckon, but I saw I'd been trying wrong—being noisy and Smart Alec, firing off this gun and riding wild through the streets at midnight, trying to show the county I was as good as anybody."

"You're on the right road, Dicker," Smith said warmly, and decisively too, as if he had reached a conclusion. "I believe you'll get started off right somewhere."

"Somewhere?" repeated Dicker in a thin voice. "I'd—sort o' been hoping to make good here, Mr. Smith, among friends—where they could see."

"But here you're surrounded with the taint of your father, and you're in purty bad associating with Batford, and rum running——"

"I only handled booze twice, and I was wrong to do it."

Smith the druggist got to his feet, as if to go.

"Scott's hard set against you, Dicker," he said. "He wouldn't let you stay, now that he's told you to go. No, boy, it looks like the best thing for you is to go."

Dicker went white again. This man who had been like a father, who had listened a moment before to his secrets, was against him too.

"I wanted this talk with you," Smith continued. "I believe you have the right stuff in you to make good, away from here, and——"

"I wanted to make good here."

"—I'm ready to let you have some money to start out on."

"To—— with your money!" flared Dicker. "To——with you. Get away from my house!"

And Smith the druggist, flushing under his tan, went.

DICKER'S thought returned to the sniper's place and the possibility of getting his man from there. And now in his hatred and bitterness, Smith was included. He went into the cabin and took up the bloody rifle and a pair of blankets.

The blankets were to strap behind the saddle, for he had to ride through town and he wished to give observers the impression that he had laid out a long journey for himself. When the blankets were secured he reentered the cabin, gathered up all the cartridges he could find for both the rifle and revolver, twenty or more for each.

"I'll need 'em," he told himself. "Soon as I fire the first shot the battle's on, same as they surrounded granddad and dad, and Batford just last night."

He mounted and rode down into town like a bandit, his sharp eyes seeing in every man and woman nothing but an enemy. He spoke to no one. On the drugstore porch a bunch of men loafed. Scott was there. Behind them against the wall leaned two or three rifles. Dicker looked frostily at them, and they wonderingly at him, but he did not stop nor nod.

A mile beyond the last houses the road branched through a gate and into a ranch so vast that it included valleys and cañons and part of a mountain range. Dicker followed this private road for miles without meeting any other traveler. When a range of high hills lay between him and town he turned off and headed back toward his starting point. It was a long way around but it was the only way to arrive at the patch of boulders—the sniper's hiding place—without being seen, and he was not at all certain that he would not be discovered.

When a break in the rocks revealed the town and the low sun beyond, he left Gray Boy tethered with the bridle reins and made his way on foot, keeping behind boulders and in gashes of the hillsides. His first necessity was to reach a gully along one side of the town and follow it for some distance, then crawl along a row of big cottonwood trees, then over a short open space, and at last into the boulder patch.

He succeeded by crawling across the open space on his stomach. This was the hour when people were at their suppers, and besides there were no houses near.

Dicker had thought it essential to arrive among the boulders before dark so as to have light to see to set the rifle's sights squarely on the door. He proceeded to do this.

He did not dare to stand upright lest he expose himself. He crawled about. Considerable searching was necessary to find a

crotch between rocks to lay the rifle in, and still more searching and sliding of rocks to get a suitable one to hold the butt steady and at the right height.

At last when he had finished, the bloody rifle lay so steady that no mere touch would shift it, the sights exactly in line on the clubroom door, and the hammer cocked and ready.

Things went well up to this point, but now a half dozen small boys came loitering along with a cow, playing tag and running. Dicker, stretched out on his stomach in a little open space where he could watch both gun and door, lay still and refrained from any movement that might attract notice. A brown boulder furnished a background that made him inconspicuous.

A breeze was blowing, singing over the rocks. It caught the old straw hat of one of the boys and sent it sliding and tumbling toward the boulders. The boy ran after it. It seemed that the hat would come in among the rocks, but at the edge the boy flung himself down on it.

When the boy got up he was where he could see down into the boulders. His glance ran over Dicker and the rifle, but not in a focused, clear-seeing way. His eyes did not meet Dicker's. A curious, startled expression passed over him. He went tearing back to rejoin the tag game.

Dicker watched anxiously to see what the youngster would do, but it did not appear that he told of having seen something unusual in the rocks. When this danger seemed past, Dicker was amazed at the steel that had come into him, for he knew that had there been an alarm and men had come his way he would have opened fire.

Dicker was high-tensed, but as darkness gathered and the wind began to croon he relaxed somewhat.

He lay with his eyes unwaveringly on the entryway at the top of the stairway on the side of the stone store building. Presently men would go up there, would be certain to go tonight, because they were in town with nothing to do.

One of the men to ascend the stairway, mused Dicker, would be Scott, the bully, who had called Gant Yauncy treacherous, and who had ordered Dicker to leave town—to leave town—to leave town——

Dicker got to crooning the phrase with the wind.

Soon after darkness had settled, a light appeared in the clubroom. The first man to enter had turned it on. Three other men went in, bunched in silhouette against the lighted doorway. As they filed in, Dicker recognized the last as Kennard. It thrilled him, for in due time he would recognize Scott in the same way, and would touch the trigger.

Dicker knew that men entering or leaving paused naturally on the threshold to turn around, or to accustom their eyes, or to close the door. There would be ample time, and the instant the silhouette, that bulking form of Scott, was square in the patch of light— Dicker licked greedy lips.

Men came and went, came and went. Then Scott. But he was with others and did not offer a fair target. Dicker thrilled like a watching jungle animal, but he had no desire to kill some other citizen or innocent stranger so he kept his finger from the trigger.

Dicker's thought was set in one mold—to kill. But it browsed here and there. Sometimes he thought of his somber father living away from men, up there in the old adobe cabin, sometimes heard again his bitter, contemptuous grumbling. Revenge would be for him, too.

Midnight came and went, according to his calculation of the passing hours. It was very dark. He ventured to stand to stretch his legs, just for a minute or two. Shortly after this something took place that he had never witnessed before and did not comprehend. A woman entered the clubroom; he saw her silhouetted against the light of the open door for three or four seconds.

A SMALL boy was not sleeping well. In turning and threshing in his cot and mumbling about Indians he awakened his mother two or three times, and toward midnight she arose and awakened him, thinking to clear his thought of the dreams that were troubling his slumber.

"Why do you keep talking about Indians?" she insisted, shaking him gently.

"Indians!" He sat up, startled.

"You've been talking about Indians, Jackie. Tell mother what it is, about Indians."

"Why, mother—" He paused. "You won't laugh at me, will you, mother?"

"Did mother ever laugh at you, child?"

"I was afraid the fellers would. Well, you see, when us fellers were helping Bob

bring up his cow this evening, my hat blowed off and I went runnin' after it. Over by the rocks, past the store—you know?"

"Yes, beyond the store."

"I jumped down to stop it and—and when I got up, I thought I saw Dicker Yauncy layin' down in the rocks, pointin' a rifle."

"Jackie! What did you do?"

"I—" Jackie swallowed.

"What did the other boys say?"

"I didn't tell 'em. I thought like daddy says—I was 'seein' things.' I didn't look any more. I—ran away."

"But you've dreamed about Indians."

"He looked like an Injun spy."

"Well, he wasn't, sonny, so you forget about it. You saw Dicker, poor boy, ride away out of town this afternoon. He couldn't have been in the rocks there at sundown."

But in her heart she was not certain. She had been brought up to believe the Yauncys were tricky and vengeful. Dicker *might* have come back. She wished her husband was at home to hear the story, but he was spending one of his rare evenings at the clubroom. She thought of going there and speaking of the matter, yet like Jackie she hesitated to risk giving a false alarm.

At last apprehension drove her to action, but not just that—she went out with the intention of investigating the boulder patch for herself.

As she approached the rock outcrop, full of dread, pausing indecisively, she heard and beheld vaguely in the blackness a form rise and stretch and yawn and lie down again.

The woman, thrilled and breathless, lost no time now in getting to the clubroom. When she threw the door open and paused for a moment on the threshold the men playing at the table and the onlookers faced her in astonishment and alarm.

"Dicker Yauncy!" she gasped. "He's hid out there in the rocks!"

"Come in," said Scott, and with the instinct of a man who has been shot at from ambush he quickly closed the door behind her.

She swiftly told of her boy's troubled dreaming, and of what he had seen among the boulders, and of what she had just seen.

"Let's go get 'im!" popped a hot-head.

"Let's don't," retorted Scott coolly.

"What'll we do then? You said he'd have to go."

"He will have to go, if he's here, but I never meant at any time to fight a boy like he was a hardened murderer."

"You said——"

"Besides, he'd likely get some of us if we rushed him, and we don't want that either."

"What'll you do?"

"If we were sure it was him out there we could surround the place and wait till daylight and catch him in the act of layin' in wait, then he'd be willing to go, I betcha!"

A knock came on the door. Before any man could take a gun the door was pushed open and a citizen with only an undershirt on his upper body leaned in.

"Dicker Yauncy's horse is back," he said. "He got to quarrelin' over the fence with my horse. He's got his saddle and bridle on, like he just got loose."

"Come in and shut the door!"

"Thought I'd tell you——"

The door was kicked shut.

"Ten to one shot," said Scott, "it's Dicker, and the quicker we act the better."

He reached over the table and turned out the single incandescent, supplied with current from the little generator in the cellar.

"So's Dicker won't see us leave," he said, "let's get busy."

In a surprizingly short time a dozen armed men were assembled in the shadows of the bank building for final instructions.

"We'll form a circle," said Scott. "Not too close in, but close enough together so he can't slip out."

"We've got to be quiet."

"You betcha. Not a word out loud. Somebody can lay in the club entryway and watch from there. Get in the rocks, and down behind that row o' cottonwood trees, and two or three along the old adobe wall. If he comes along, try to grab him. Otherwise, wait till daylight. He'll do something then sure, if it's nothing more than leaving to catch up his horse and hide out again.

"Let's go men, and remember, ab-solute-ly no shootin'—unless he opens on *us*."

"It's hard lines, doing a boy this way," said another. "But scmetimes you've got to handle a boy hard."

They begun to separate to distribute themselves in a tight circle with the boulder patch for the hub.

DICKER YAUNCY became weary of waiting for the clubroom door to open and let the woman come out. What could she be doing so long?

The clear sweet crooning of the wind over the rocks and its gentle wisping in the dry grass lulled him and enthralled him. His troubles and Scott begun to coalesce into the purring, pleading melody.

His thought would not stick to the entryway up there but slid about—how fine it'd be to make good here—foreman of a ranch—Scott—Smith wanting him to go—empty cartridges—his father's brooding—his old gun and what it stood for—empty cartridges——

Well, his cartridges weren't empty this time! He dug them out of his pocket and laid them handily for loading.

The purring of the wind in the nooks and crannies became a caress—no wonder his dad had walked so much at night and slept among the windy crags—queer things got into a fellow's mind—queer things that made the throat hurt—and made a man want to do differently——

IF ANY of the circle of waiting men became skeptical in the chill night that a man lay in the rocks, and half-believed they were holding an empty sack, the doubt was dispersed in the darkest hour by the flare of a match in the boulder patch. After that they watched with keened senses.

When the gray of dawn came questing across the land, the watchers whispered urgent questions.

"Is he there? Can *you* see anything?"

When more light came their squinted eyes made out something that at first seemed only fancy—a rifle, not pointing, but leaning up against a rock as if it had been stood there.

Further light assured them that it was a rifle, but it seemed to be ownerless, for there was no token of a man's presence.

"He's got away," came the quick conclusion.

Scott got to his feet behind a clutter of detached rocks. The other members of the circle followed suit one by one, and without a signal closed in slowly, watchfully, guns ready.

They bunched together and approached from two sides. They saw that the rifle was bloody, undoubtedly Dicker's that Batford had used in the cabin. A revolver, Gant Yauncy's old Colt's that Dicker had toted, lay on the ground by the rifle's butt, and with it a little pile of bullets pulled and twisted from cartridges, while the empty shells themselves were arranged on a smoothed-off spot to spell two words:

EMPTY CARTRIDGES

A burnt match showed how the speller had seen in the darkness that the letters were correctly arranged.

"By heavens!" whispered Smith, the druggist. "He's surrendered."

"Why, it means he's surrendered everything!" roared the staring Scott. "Guns, gun totin', threats, traditions——"

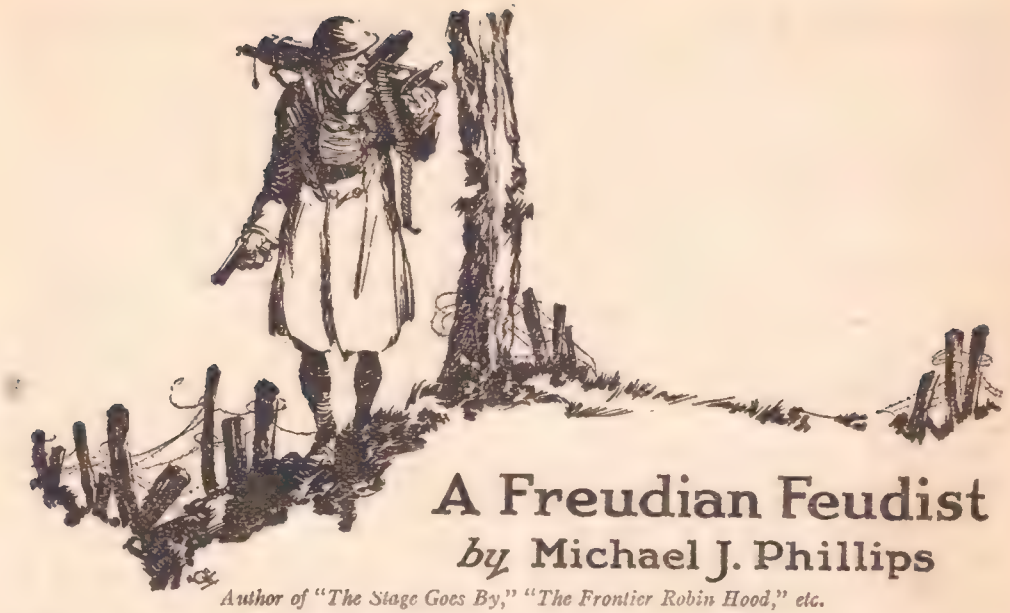
At this roar Dicker sat up between the two boulders where he had lain in watch. He was surprized at the presence of the armed men, but no resentment was on his face. Somehow the crooning wind, or the thoughts it brought, had altered him. He knew it. The men saw the effect.

"I've been asleep," he said.

Scott gestured to the empty cartridges.

"That's the best spellin' I ever saw," he declared. "Dicker, you can have that job on my ranch now, if you still want it."

"Sure," answered Dicker softly, and without animosity, "I'll take it."



A Freudian Feudist

by Michael J. Phillips

Author of "The Stage Goes By," "The Frontier Robin Hood," etc.

A LONG-BARRELED squirrel rifle cracked from the leafy ambush of the hillside. Jud Connell swayed in the saddle and then slipped, empty hands clutching, to the ground. The man who fired did not investigate or fire again. He knew his gun and his aim.

In ordinary times the officials in the little county seat, mountain town, of Hawkins Bridge would say of such an occurrence: "The Connell-McKay feud has broken out again. Tom McKay just killed Jud Connell."

And there would follow some specious activity, but no real interference until some of the Connell clan evened up by killing Tom McKay. For laws and courts existed, but feuds, in that stagnant pool of remote upland life, stood above them both. There had always been feuds in the Hawkins neighborhood, people reasoned; and there always would be.

But now it happened to be different. The World War stirred deeply the pool, as it stirred the rest of the country. Hawkins Bridge felt it to be indecent, this absorption of Tom McKay in his own affairs, while patriotism burned so fiercely and most people forgot self. So the sheriff, accompanied by a posse too big to be trifled with, brought the mountaineer in next day. And the day following, the district court sent him, resentful and bewildered, to prison for life. The State did not have capital punishment.

Nor did they stop there. Young Jud Connell, who immediately swore vengeance, went to the county jail before he could keep his oath. Young Tom McKay they picked up for his own safety, and locked in the empty juvenile ward upstairs.

Within a few days the draft board announced the list of those first to go. It may have been only coincidence. At any rate the names of both young men appeared in the published lists. They went, with the balance of the Hawkins County contingent, to the State mobilization camp in a special car attached to the branch local.

Young Jud Connell waited his chance; he had something to say. Opportunity did not present itself on the train, since his comrades, fearing an outbreak, watched him too closely. But at camp they fell in line with hundreds of other young fellows and thus became separated. Jud forced himself into the queue, waiting to check in immediately behind Tom McKay.

Young Tom hated the feud. Its shadow darkened his boyhood. He felt that some day it would cost him his life. He did not fear; but it seemed so futile to live in an atmosphere of suspicion and suspense and revenge, of endlessly plotting murder and scheming to avoid being murdered. He liked to laugh and to joke, to attract friends by his clean and joyful personality.

Laughter came too infrequently into Hawkins County lives, where the tentacles of the feud, directly or indirectly, gripped every family.

Now Tom turned wide-open gray eyes on the taller, stouter figure that loomed over him.

"I'm a-goin' to kill you," Jud Connell promised in a malignant whisper. One could not doubt he meant what he said as he leaned forward, fairly hissing the words. The cold, poisonous feud-anger brutalized his zealot's face. He did not look the bad-man. Rather, he conveyed the impression of puritan determination mingled with puritan ascetism.

His narrow temples; the projecting bony sockets into which his little eyes retreated; his high-bridged, thin, almost delicate nose; the brief lines on either side of his mouth, caused by the compression of his long lips, all revealed a man who might not only make martyrs, but who might become a martyr.

Jud Connell believed absolutely in the righteousness of the feud. He upreared the bitter law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

"Yore pap killed my pap; I'm a-goin' to kill you," he repeated.

"My pap went to jail for it—for life," replied Tom, in the same cautious tone.

Connell's face contorted itself into a bleak smile.

"I don't guess that counts. He's took care of; he don't have to work no mo'. There's a roof oveh his haid an' he has enough to eat. That ain't death. That's rewardin' him. You die in place o' him."

Young McKay shrugged his shoulders and took a slow step as the line crawled forward. No retort occurred to him. There could be no retort. The mountain law, all the stronger for being unwritten, stood back of the other's words. When Connell could execute conveniently the sentence, it would be executed.

Jud Connell did not intend his words as a warning and Tom did not understand them as a warning. They were not uttered in the spirit of "I'm giving you a chance; defend yourself." Fair play and sportsmanship and chivalry did not enter into the code of the feudist. You killed your enemy when and where and how you could. You shot him in the back from behind a stone fence. Or, you killed him when you met him unexpectedly on the road. Or, you went to his cabin at night, with the advantage of numbers and darkness, and called him out, and slew him as he stood blinking in the candlelight. The code did not seem unfair. He did the same things to you.

So Connell spoke in the spirit of a sheriff, regularly elected for a grim job; hill custom, and the fact that he now stood as the leader of his family, made him executioner.

CHANCE tossed the two boys into the same company where speedily, each in his own way, they became marked. Their gifts and their characters lifted them above the ruck. Tom played the harmonica, shrilling forth irresistible mountain dance-tunes that had intrigued the hill-folk for generations. Men liked him, gathered about him.

Jud proved a remarkable scout and tracker. As battle problems followed the early weeks of preliminary training he turned up the theoretical enemy and his hidden intentions as unerringly as a good field-dog points a partridge. He read signs like an Indian.

But he did not possess the elements of popularity. There seemed little real mirth in him. He proved solitary rather than gregarious. This preparation for war did not bring to him as it did to the others the uplift of a great adventure. It left him cold. He burrowed along in his own subterranean course, while they disported in the thrilling sunshine above ground.

He revealed curious and unpopular characteristics. The company slept in a typical cantonment barracks, a frame building with thickly-spaced windows on either side. Two long rows of iron cots marched down the room, heads to the walls, feet toward the narrow aisle in the center. The cots stood so closely that a hand could reach those on either side of any of them.

Late one night an obscene clamor broke out, a flood of shouts and animal-like growls followed by a succession of high-pitched screams that held up a mirror to pure terror. Men popped upright in their cots, fumbled for matches, fumbled for the unaccustomed light switch, calling fearfully to each other. The first sergeant rushed in, swearing, a flashlight in one hand, an automatic in the other.

The tardy incandescents pointed to Connell as the author of the clamor. His blanket over his head he kicked and

thrashed convulsively, while his screams cut the babble like a knife. They jerked the blanket off and, panting and gasping, he came slowly to himself.

"Say, what's eatin' you?" harshly demanded the top-kicker. And then, at the utter fright in the man's eyes, he moderated his tone—

"What's all the fuss, Connell?"

The youth smiled sheepishly and wiped a clammy dew from his forehead.

"I—I reckon I got this here blanket over my haid," he stammered. "I done thought I was a—a-sm—a-smotherin'."

He pronounced the word hesitatingly, trying to suppress a shudder.

"Bad dream," remarked the first sergeant. "You sure made more noise than a steam calliope. Well, bed down, everybody. And no talking. Reveille goes at the same old hour."

A COLLEGE-BRED youth who should have worn shoulder-straps, but who preferred the irresponsibilities of the private soldier, explained to a group of them next day just what it meant.

"An atavism," he said. "A throwback to his ancestors a few thousand, or a few million years ago.

"Probably the tribe was living on an island and a tidal wave swept over it, drowning every one but the original Mr. Connell, who might have been called Tigertooth then. Or it was in cave-man times, and an earthquake buried 'em.

"Whatever it was, this forebear escaped with his life. But he had a narrow squeak. And the horror burned itself so deep in his consciousness that, it persists in his descendants to this day. Every once in awhile, in Connell's sleep, something interferes with his breathing, and that terrible fear of the old boy with the long tail comes shooting to the surface again, just as if it was yesterday. And then he does what that frightened ancestor of his did, he yips like a wolf in a trap."

Some of this Tom McKay did not understand but it dovetailed with his own knowledge. He recalled that Connell as a small boy had a persisting fear of deep water. When they went swimming in the pool in the branch Jud never ducked under; his hair remained dry. And once when Orky Prior leaped on his back unexpectedly and bore him beneath the surface Jud, sobbing in a frenzy of rage and fright, mashed in the bully's face with a stone. And, similarly, he chased Luke Capers with an ax, because Capers had teasingly thrust his head into a grain sack.

The atavism remained a fixed substantiality in the life of the company. When the preliminary growls began in the dead of night some one ran to the switch, usually remarking as he did so—

"That —— hill-billy is in again!"

The men on either side of Connell snatched off the blanket and shook and beat him into wakefulness. The animal-like cries jangled hidden strings of prehistoric fear in every one.

Naturally the recurring seizures did not add to Connell's popularity. Another incident increased the general faint dislike. Orders required every man to box, since boxing taught quickness of the eye and coordination of the muscles. Also, on the battlefield, a man trained in the use of his fists, allied experts said, held an advantage over an enemy not so trained.

Each man boxed with others near his own weight. But of course, some knew more of the sport than the rest and gave their adversaries a lively time. Connell drew Dick Bradley, a city-bred youth; a skilled amateur who knew all the tricks of the ring, while Connell seemed awkward and untrained. In fact he had scarcely seen a set of boxing-gloves before coming to camp. They wrestled in the hill-country. But they did not box.

Bradley peppered him through three lively rounds, dancing in and out, hitting from every angle, and easily parrying Connell's attempts at retaliation. The blows stung and jolted, and rage mounted in Connell. In the fourth round his unexpected rush, coupled with a slight roughness in the sod ring overthrew Bradley, who fell on his back. Scowling, the hillman sprang upon him astride, pinning the other youth down by the grip of his knees. And, as he held him, Connell flailed insanely with both fists, striking the upturned face with the hard heel of his hands in an effort to bruise and cut.

A chorus of angry shouts rose. Men came running from every direction. They jerked Connell roughly from his prostrate opponent. Curses filled the air. First Sergeant McCoyne forced his way through the threatening press to ask:

"Here, you wild man, what's the matter with you? What you trying to do, anyway? You can't hit a man while he's down!"

"Why cain't I?" demanded Connell, fiercely. "He done hit me, didn't he?"

"Sure he hit you," replied the top, while the crowd jeered. "But he hit you while you were on your feet, defending yourself. You've got to be a square shooter, Connell. Give the other fellow a chance."

The deepset little eyes burned. Connell ignored his jostling comrades.

"The idee is to win, ain't it? I'm done supposed to put him out. Well, if I git him down I kin put him out quicker than to stand up and try to fight him."

"Say, you poor bug," ejaculated the first sergeant; "didn't you ever hear of fair play? You've got to give the other guy a run for his money if you're any kind of a white man. Be a sport. Ain't there such a thing as fair play back there in the sticks?"

Fair play. The phrase genuinely puzzled Jud Connell. He tried to fit it into his past experience of life, and could not. It did not enter into a feud, for instance. You couldn't give the other fellow a chance. Why, if you did, he'd kill you, sure! You just took your opportunity and killed him while you could. You didn't dare say: "I'll give you two minutes to get ready before I shoot," when you met a rival clansman. If you did, you'd be dead before the end of the first minute.

Yet this swarming mob of men in olive-drab seemed to know what it meant and to practice it almost without thinking. In the daily football game it often happened that the best player of the opposing team lay motionless after a scrimmage. And they waited, like fools, until he could get up and play again! Not only that, but a rival player would slip an arm under the prostrate man's head and lift him up while another gave him a drink of water. Why, sometimes they walked him around, his arms over the shoulders of the two of them, until he recovered his bearings and got the kinks out of his legs after a pile up.

That seemed like a sinful waste of opportunity to Connell. The aim was to win, wasn't it? If it wasn't, what was the use of playing? In his philosophy, when you got a good player groggy, the thing to do was keep on piling up on him until he had to retire. Then you could go ahead and win the game. Fair play—shucks!

THE months slipped by. The officers and men of the division advanced in the theory of their profession. They constructed miles of trenches and manned them. They built dugouts far underground and lived in them for days. They made dummies, attached them to overhead frames so that they swayed uneasily and used them as targets in bayonet practice. And from these activities they advanced to bayonet duels, man to man.

They liked the bayonet tilts. Agility and quickness of eye, suppleness of wrist and ability to read the other fellow's mind all tended to overcome the advantage of mere size and strength. Besides, they knew they couldn't pick their enemies on the battlefield, you took them as they came. So little men dueled big men and valiantly thrust and parried. In the course of events it became inevitable that Connell and McKay should face each other over the steel.

It happened one day while the entire company practiced, two by two, on the hard-packed drill-field. No one thought of the Hawkins County feud. Neither of the adversaries who now took position at the order of the lieutenant ever spoke of it to any one else. A great majority of their comrades knew nothing of it.

As the long, bright knives came together Connell repeated his litany in an undertone of fierce joy:

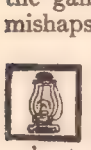
"Yore pap killed my pap. And I'm a-goin' to kill you."

It did not occur to young McKay to protest the assignment; to call on the officers for protection. Back in civil life one fought one's feud without regarding the authorities. Why appeal to them now? If it had to be, it had to be. Connell intended killing him sometime. Fate would soon reveal whether the time had come.

Despite his fatalism McKay fought skillfully and bravely. He stopped the other's mad-bull rushes again and again. He summoned all his skill to turn the eager blade aside. But the feudist's savage strength and determination overbore him, made him give ground, beat him down. Just as the whistle blew to cease practice, he made a final despairing effort to divert a thrust aimed at his heart. He forced it down and aside. But not enough, the blade went deep into his left thigh.

Captain David Hatfield, overseeing the bayonet practice, happened to be near by

and signaled the motor ambulance. The car rushed the wounded soldier to the hospital. Captain Hatfield suspended the drill when he noted how the men's nerves crawled after McKay fell. Connell said nothing, but wiped his scarlet blade. All assumed it to be an accident. They knew the game to be a dangerous one. Minor mishaps constantly happened.



THAT evening the captain sent for the hillman. As the tall and angular Connell stood against the tent-pole, turning his hat restlessly in his wide, red hands, Hatfield looked at him in the light of a flickering candle. Finally when the long silence ate like acid into Connell's mind, the captain abruptly spoke:

"You didn't stab McKay accidentally this afternoon, Connell. You tried to kill him. And let me tell you right now if you had, you'd be standing before a wall in less than a week. A firing-squad takes care of murderers nicely."

"Aw, well," returned the soldier, in a monotone, "shootin' ain't so bad."

"What did you do it for?" demanded the captain.

The hillman raised his burning, deepset eyes.

"His pap killed my pap. And I'm a-goin' to kill him."

"Feud?"

"Yes, suh."

Hatfield himself sprang from hinterland stock. He understood feuds and feudists. He knew ordinary arguments could not prevail. He realized that court martial, disgrace and imprisonment would make no difference; that as soon as he secured his release Connell would take up methodically his plan to kill his blood-enemy. And meanwhile the Army would be deprived of the services of a man who, because of his ability as a scout, might be exceedingly valuable Over There.

"You ought to be a proud man, Connell," the captain went on quietly. The hillman, startled out of his sullen defensiveness, looked at him in surprize.

"There aren't very many in this division who can claim the things you can. You see, you're of pretty nearly the purest-bred of American stock. The Connell family came over along time ago. Your ancestors had a hand in making this country. They fought for it in the Revolution. It's the kind of country that they and a mighty few others like them started it out to be. They were real patriots. They held the life of the nation above their own, its safety above their safety."

The deepset eyes glowed. The hillman proudly straightened himself.

"Yes, suh!"

"I suppose that Connells, your people, have fought in every war since 1776," went on Hatfield. "The Mexican war, of course; and they were out in 'sixty-one——"

"Both my ol' gran'paps fit fo' Lincoln in the Cival wah," interrupted Connell. "Yes, suh; we wuz always foh ouah country. My Uncle Jeff, he died of the fevah in the Cuban wah."

The captain nodded.

"And now comes along this war and the Connells are in it. You're upholding the family traditions that far." He shifted suddenly in his canvas chair and pointed an accusing finger. "And yet you're the first traitor among them!"

A dull red burned on the high cheekbones.

"Whut do you mean, suh—a traituh?" asked Connell ominously.

"A traitor is one who extends aid and comfort to the enemy in time of war," defined Hatfield. "Well, you're trying to kill a soldier of the American Army. If you do it, we'll have to shoot you. McKay is a good soldier. He's a lighthearted young fellow; likes to joke and dance. And he can play the mouth-organ like a whitehead. He's a splendid thing for the morale of this outfit. That is—" he suited his language to the understanding of the man before him—"he keeps the boys cheered up, keeps them from getting blue and downhearted and homesick. A moping soldier isn't much good as a fighter. That's why McKay is valuable. He'll be worth a lot more when we get across.

"And you, you're a fine shot. You'll be valuable in getting information, in night raids to No Man's Land. You have keen eyes. I've never seen a man who can guess out a troop movement quicker than you can.

"Well, you're a traitor because you're trying to deprive the country, your country, of the services of two men who can do a lot toward winning the war."

Connell blinked and swallowed.—

"His pap killed my pap—" he began.

"Is that any reason why you should be a traitor?"

The soldier inhaled deeply, to break out again in remonstrance. But he thought better of it and did not speak. He stood in silence, shifting from one foot to the other and endlessly turning his hat. At last he looked up.

"I see, suh," he acknowledged, subdued. "It wouldn't be right. I don't aim to be no traituh. I done promise you I leave this—this McKay—"he spat out the name as it gagged him—"alone till the wah is ovuh. But afteh that—" He compressed his lips until the lines on either side of his mouth cut deeply into his cheeks.

"I accept your promise," said the captain. "And we'll let the thing of this afternoon ride. We'll call it an accident. Go back to your quarters."

AT LAST, after many delays, the division went over. McKay, fully recovered from his wound, accompanied it. He felt more easy in his mind than at any time since entering the service. The captain told him of Connell's promise to forget the feud until after the war. That rolled back a cloud which filmed his spirits and left a weight which rested sickeningly on his heart. For now he could give all his attention to the Germans and keep his face to the front. He needed no longer to turn his chin over his shoulder, watching for death from the rear.

In due time they completed the preliminary training behind the lines; stood their seasoning in a quiet sector; and then went, a qualified fighting unit, into the front-line trenches. And almost at once old ideas sank out of sight and values shifted. Those popular and respected for cantonment accomplishments became unconsidered. Men heretofore regarded with dislike or contempt loomed. Their war-worth revealed itself.

Connell achieved prominence, almost distinction. He proved a splendid asset. By choice he crawled out alone at night into the devil's stewpot between the lines. Hours later he came back bone-weary and plastered with mud but bringing a prisoner for questioning or valuable information as to the enemy's dispositions and intentions.

He flanked a troublesome machine-gun nest by crawling unseen somehow over what appeared to be a bare ridge. Bullets and shell-fragments whipped it. He killed the gun-crew and brought back the gun, earning a decoration and a sergeant's stripes for the feat.

The war dragged on. The division alternated between the fighting sector and the rest-camps; losing men, assimilating replacements, fighting, and becoming more expert at fighting. Came the summer, the early autumn of 1918. And then, the big push.

They lost count of time. Weariness piled on weariness until they could feel no more. They ate, irregularly and drank muddy water from contaminated ditches. The one thought possessed them, to roll Heinie back through those bogs and forests of splintered trees and cratered ravines, roll him back to Berlin.

Heinie fought cunningly as he retreated. Unexpectedly, on a soggy day when the wind blew just right, he drenched them with gas, released from containers and fired over in shells. Tom McKay got a whiff of it before he could adjust his mask. The captain noted his condition and sent him to the rear.

Tom stumbled and crawled across the ground just taken. His lungs seemed closing up. He wheezed and gasped, fell in semi-unconsciousness, and rose to labor again. He clung to his rifle with its fixed bayonet, clung because it supported him, but also because of the instinct of the soldier to keep his weapon by him. As darkness came he slid down gratefully against the wall of a ruined French farmhouse. The battered stones stood up like jagged teeth, but between them, light streamed from within. Surgeons worked heroically on the other side of the wall against the rising tide of the wounded.

Tom either slept or fainted. When he awoke sometime later he became conscious of steadily repeated moans and gasps. He raised giddily on his elbow. The man beside him, his face visible in one of the spears of light, evidently suffered severely from gassing. He leaned forward a little, to recognize Jud Connell.

The hillman's great chest heaved like a leaky bellows as he sucked breath into the whispering lungs. His nostrils, to aid in the fight for air, extended themselves to the thinness of paper, with little patches of white about their lower curves where the tissue protracted itself. His mouth gaped open and his tongue extended like a stricken animal's. And a terrible, an insane fear shone in his little, deep-socketed eyes.

"It's his atav—atavism," Tom told himself, as he looked fascinated at his enemy. "He ain't no mo' bad gassed than I be, prob'ly. He'll get over it if he just ketches hold of himself. But he's out o' his haid for fear o' smotherin'. It's like the time he got ducked back there in the branch."

A thought came to him almost with the force of a blow. The war must be nearly over; the Germans couldn't stand this retreat forever. When they did quit, that meant the feud-truce ended, Connell would be free to kill him. Well, he'd seen enough killin' not to be meachin' about it any more. He'd end this dodging and dreading. He drew his rifle to him and pressed the bayonet-catch. The handle of the long knife nestled in his hand.

Connell heard the click and turned his fear-haunted eyes. He saw who bent over him, understood what impended. But he made no move to defend himself. Pinned down by his inherited dread he lay helpless, awaiting death. He recognized the operation of the feud law, and acknowledged its justice. This hated McKay could end it here and now. He had given no promise to suspend the feud, even though Connell bound himself by his word to the captain.

Yet the hillman did not fear death by the bayonet. His reversion made him dread only the agonies of strangulation or suffocation. To control that ancestrally-implanted complex was beyond him. But the feud-code required him to face his enemy fearlessly and calmly, when that enemy overcame him. Labored pauses between the words, he husked grimacingly as he clutched at the air needed to speak:

"Better do it befo' I git around. Yore pap killed my pap an' I'm a-goin' to kill you."

Tom McKay raised his bayonet, held it suspended over the other's throat. He spurred himself to strike. He ground his teeth and scourged up the thought of what the future meant if he did not end, now and forever, the menace which hung over him.

But he could not to it. With a sob he dropped the bayonet and on hands and knees crawled away to the other side of the house.

A YEAR passed and October came again before McKay returned to his native State. The gas struck deep into his lungs and the surgeons kept him at various hospitals in an effort to check further ravages. Apparently rest and a careful diet halted its advances; but they could not restore his strength. Hollow-cheeked and dull-eyed, he wandered south.

He found his father a trusty in the State penitentiary, if not actually content with his lot at least resigned. His mother had died during his absence. He passed through Hawkins Bridge and climbed the winding, stony roads, little more than trails, to the home of a widowed sister.

Her log cabin sat in a small clearing on the shoulder of Blackberry Mountain. It overlooked the gorge in which the river sparkled, and spread before the observer an infinity of tumbled blue peaks stretching far off to the sky-roof. The Indian summer sun shone warmly and the sick youth sat motionless in its luster, his back against the cabin wall.

On the fifth evening of his stay, Silas Coates, a brother-in-law, came over from Coates' Clearing. He carried a long-barreled rifle and wore a revolver. Tom's heart sank at sight of the grim implements of the feud. Silas' words confirmed his forebodings.

"Yo're to have visitors tonight," he announced, as he sat by the fireplace, the rifle between his knees.

"Them fetch-taked Connell skunks air a-comin'. Jud heerd tell of yo' bein' at Hawkins Bridge on the way up here. So I reckon they'll climb this spur about midnight."

"Air yo' sure?"

"C'ose I'm shore. Bud Ealsley tol' me. But we'll fix 'em." He grinned through his beard and spat tobacco-juice into the fire. "Mel an' Ed, an' Hugh Cottrell an' Simon Coates an' Norm McKay will be here befo' long. I'see Sally done kep' the ol' gun."

His eyes lifted to the buckhorns on the wall.

"That makes seven of us, all pretty well armed. Three-fo' of us'll stay in the house; the rest'll hide out in the shed. When they come, onknowin', we'll ketch 'em between two fires. An' they'll be some less Connells to pizen the world, when we git through."

Jud Connell, back home several months, yearned for vengeance. Tom knew that sooner of later, this visitation must take place. The slumbering feud would waken, to run its crimson course down the years, taking its toll of one life, or two, or three, each twelfth month. He rose.

"Sile, we don't need to be here when they come. You all, Sallie, an' the kids, kin go on over to the clearin'. The boys kin go back home. Then the Connells won't find nobody to shoot up."

Silas frowned.

"Where'll you be?"

"Well, I been thinkin' on goin' west. They say it's easier fo' the lungs out there. I'll ketch the night train at the bridge."

Sally's face paled at sight of Silas; she made an instinctive gesture of protection toward her flaxen-haired children when he revealed his scheme. But after all she was a mountain woman, and a feudist.

"Yo' aimin' to run away?" she shrilled. "You, Tom McKay, turn yo' back on them snakes o' Connells? You coward!"

Tom gathered together his few belongings.

"That's all right, Sallie. I don't aim to take part in no mo' feudin'. I seen too much killin' over across."

His sister's scorn and his brother-in-law's anger could not deter him.

"Jud Connell tells yo're a coward," said Sile, harshly, as Tom stood with his hand on the latch of the slab door. "He brags yo' had a chance to kill him in France and didn't have the spunk. I never knew the time would come when I had to agree with a Connell."

"I seen too much killin' over across," he repeated.

They answered coldly his good-byes. He closed the door behind him. The stars lighted the way along well-re-membered paths like beacons, even where the shadows lay thickest. Twice he left the accustomed way to lie in the brush like a hunted fox, once when his own kin went by, rifles over arms, and some time later when the Connells mounted the ridge in single file, silhouetted for a moment against the spangled sky, like a squad-column going into action.

Tom reached Los Angeles friendless and alone, but he did not long remain so. The service button in the lapel of his coat, sooner or later, brought from a passerby, or from a neighbor on a park bench—

"Hello, buddy; what outfit?"

A veterans' organization gathered him in, pronounced him entitled to compensation and vocational training, and secured them for him.

He revealed a liking for machinery and they placed him in a garage where he learned automobile repairing. He acquired a limping car and tinkered it until it ran smoothly. He earned good wages and saved his money. Many patrons of the garage liked him and asked for him to do their work.

But he could not be at ease and satisfied. His sister, relenting, wrote to him that Jud Connell escaped the ambush Silas set for him. He knew that, sooner or later, the singleminded feudist would track him down to kill him. The thought darkened his life. Besides, tuberculosis prowled like a wolf just beyond the thin danger-line. He grew no worse. But he built up few reserves of strength, and remained half sick.

A cold slipped through his defenses the third winter and he could not shake it off. Hospitalization grew necessary. He drove his little car to the south and entered the government tuberculosis sanatorium at Camp Kearny.

There he regained lost ground and enjoyed some weeks of peace. Until, late one night, a hodgepodge of sounds laid a cold finger on his heart. Shouts, animal-like growls, shrieks of groveling fear; exclamations, the complaining of cot-springs; the scuff of running feet in an adjoining ward.

He knew that his enemy had discovered him now. How, he could not be sure. But probably through his sister's letters, since a Connell worked in the postoffice at Hawkins Bridge. They met next morning, face to face. The feudist, Tom saw, also suffered from tuberculosis, the victim like himself of that gassing in the big push.

"Hah!" snarled Connell, apparently not at all surprized. "So I done found yo', hey? Yore kin shot my cousin Yancey Connell an' done hit me in the back. Yore pap killed my pap. And I'm a-goin' to kill you."

Connell rapidly recovered. He obeyed the rules with a ferocious zeal, a single object in view, to gain strength to execute the sentence of death on Tom, and to undergo the hardships of hiding out in the mountains thereafter, until he could escape. Bound by the unwritten feudal law and the fatalism of the mountaineer, Tom made no complaint to the hospital staff and said no word to any patient. If it had to be, it had to be. Besides, the long and merciless chase tired him. As well now as any time.

Camp Kearny, composed of sprawling ranks of ugly and weathered frame buildings, scattered over a wide expanse in apparent aimlessness, squats in a rolling

and arid section of Southern California. There are little hollows in the hills which fill to the brim with sunshine and with a soft, light, dry air three hundred-odd days of the year. It is balsam and a benediction merely to sit in one of these cups of healing, lean back against the sandy incline, and bask like a lizard. Tom loved to wander away alone and seek one of the secluded nooks, to be laved in the healing sun and air.

He sat thus one afternoon, eyes closed, all but sleeping, when a cascade of rolling pebbles roused him. He looked into the merciless little eyes of Jud Connell, who strode down the incline.

"I done waited some time fo' this chance," said the feudist, in low tones, unbroken by inflections. "At last I'm a-goin' to kill you."

Tom rose, though knowing himself no match for the larger and more powerful Connell, now practically well again. His enemy brushed his hands aside, clutched Tom by the neck, and pushed him backward against the bank. The club-like thumbs closed in on either side of the throat. Tom McKay slipped toward death.

From a companion hollow uprose Doctor Arthur Blatchford, a husky Health Service medico who also liked to wander away from the citadel of the ailing for solitude and self-communion. His ears caught the voice of Connell and the sounds of the struggle. He climbed out of his pit, looked down, and then rushed.

Descending on Connell from behind, he raised the billman with a bone-bruising shoulder-grip; whirled him round; and with a sweeping right-hander knocked him neatly on his head and shoulders against the opposite sandy incline.

Rage on his smeared face Connell dug his elbows into the sand and hunched forward to rise.

"As you were!" barked the medico.

The military command, the habit of military obedience and the power of Doctor Blatchford's arm operated restrainingly on the feudist. He lay still.

Some rapid and expert manipulation brought back Tom's breath and his fluttering spirit. Panting weakly, he sprawled on the sand. The medico, fists on hips, stood between the two men and looked from one to the other. Latterly he gave Connell his entire scrutiny.

"Attention!" he snapped, and the feudist got to his feet, wiping the blood from his face.

The medico's eyes went over Connell, inch by inch, for a long minute, and then focused on the decoration on his left breast.

"Where did you steal that medal?" Blatchford rasped.

Bewilderedly Connell looked down at it, fingered the bit of bronze.

"Why, suh, I done won that. The gen'l hisself gave it to me."

Blatchford's smile curled contemptuously his lips.

"Oh, no, he didn't," he denied. "No one gave you that. You stole it. They give medals only to brave men. And you're a coward—a miserable, sneaking coward! You trail a sick man out here to kill him like a dog. He isn't half your weight and strength. You gave him no chance at all for his life. You haven't any more sense of fair play than a beast."

There it was again, fair play. Connell blinked his deepset eyes doggedly and rejoined:

"I don't see whut fair play's got to do with it, suh. His pap done killed my pap, an' I'm shore a-goin' to kill him."

"Feudist, eh? We'll see about that," grimly promised the medico. "The disease seems to be arrested in your case. You can stand punishment; and you need it. After you make a few tons of big rocks into little ones you may change your mind about who you're going to kill. Get back to camp. I'll attend to your case."

DOCTOR BLATCHFORD had a long talk with Tom McKay that evening. When Tom finished his story under sympathetic questioning, the medico said:

"So that's the reason you haven't been showing much improvement the last few weeks—since this big bully came. Well, I'm going to talk frankly to you, though maybe not very professionally. How much money have you?"

"Oh, enough to support me for mo' than a yeah, suh."

"That's good. And you have your own car. Now, McKay, I don't believe we can do a great deal for you here. Psychology is an important factor in tuberculosis. If you could be satisfied I'd say you should remain. But you can't. The worry over this fellow Connell, and what's happened today couldn't very well be forgotten.

"We might get rid of him somehow. But you'd be expecting him to come sneaking back. And to waylay you again, or shoot through a window."

"Yes, suh, I would," agreed Tom, somberly.

"You can't get well under such conditions. I have a suggestion to make. Spring's coming on. For the next seven or eight months most people in the Southwest would be better off if they slept out of doors rather than under a roof. And that's especially true of tubercular cases.

"Get yourself one of those folding canvas cots and a mattress to fit it, and three or four army blankets, with a piece of canvas to go over them and keep out the wind and chill. Put them in the back end of your car and start out.

"Head into Arizona, into the desert. Away from big towns. Don't travel far in a day. When it gets tiresome to drive, stop and make camp. Set up your cot in the open. If you find a place you like, stay as long as you enjoy it.

"Feed yourself well. Get fresh eggs and milk when you can. Eat three good meals and a couple of lunches every day. Don't try to work. Get a mosquito-netting for your cot and ropes for your canvas so you can rig a shelter and sleep some in the afternoons. You'll find a good many other ex-service men, probably, leading the same sort of life as you are. And for the same reason. Throw in with one of them. It won't be so lonesome.

"And don't worry. We'll hold this killer for a couple of weeks until you get a good start. He'll never know where you headed. Anyway, inside of a year you should be in trim to knock all those feud notions out of him."

Tom went slowly back to the ward, crowding down the skepticism that rose within him. It sounded all right but Connell, most skilled of trackers, would never give up the blood-trail. Sooner or later, it had to come. Still, he didn't want to die. And the idea of a change appealed to him. It would be pleasant, gipsying through the desert and sleeping under the stars. So pondering, he came to his cot.

A Los Angeles paper lay in the chair beside it. Standing by the window to catch the waning light, he glanced through it, idly, until his eye caught a short article under a Reno, Nevada, dateline. He read the item through fixedly. Looked up, pondered, read it through again. He laughed, a harsh, unpleasant laugh, with triumph in it. He tore out the bit of news and put it in his pocket.

When, against the protests of the hospital authorities he left the second day thereafter in his little car, he did not head east. Rather, he drove north, and in due time turned into Nevada.

NOT far inside the borders Tom found Twenty-Mile Cañon. And there he stayed, for he liked it. The cañon, off the main road, escaped the notice of motor-tourists. It opened out from a flat, sandy plain which bore a desert growth of tortured Joshua trees, mesquite, greasewood and sage and which seemed to stretch to the edge of the world.

As a camping-place it proved ideal. Just inside the cañon's mouth, a little spring welled up. Its waters, girt by a narrow ring of green, sank out of sight soon after they appeared. Yet they proved more than sufficient for his needs. The cañon, underlaid by a subterranean stream, raised trees and bushes which provided wood.

The ranch-house of the big Circle C ranch stood in a similar cañon only three miles east. Greater springs fed the reservoir beside it, and with plenty of water the Circle C people raised other things than cattle. Tom drove over daily, for milk and eggs and vegetables. This journey; the skirmishing for wood with his handax and saw; the preparation of meals; and long hours of reading and sleeping filled acceptably his day. Steadily he gained strength. It would have been a wonderful existence only——

He glanced often out along the winding track to the main road. When he woke in the blue, electric chill, before the silent and glorious riot of the desert dawn he listened with all his senses for some sound other than the lonesome yapping and howling of the coyotes.

Yet that which he expected, came unexpectedly. He heard no noise, one evening as he sat by his campfire. That may have been because he dozed. But when he raised his head with a start he confronted the grim face of Jud Connell through the smoke.

"I done found yo'," said the feudist, in his monotonous tone. "Yo' thought yo' wuz good at hidin'. But here I am. And——"

"My pap killed yo' pap, an' now yo're a-goin' to kill me," interrupted Tom. "I think I've heard yo' say that befo'."

He spoke lightly, almost flippantly. The avenger's single-track mind paused in its course, as though at an unexpected and unseemly obstacle. The words did not betoken a proper spirit, in one facing death.

"Yes, I'm a-goin' to kill yo'," Connell retorted, shaking slightly the rifle which he held. And it seemed as if he forced emphasis into the sentence, to give it a significance it somehow lacked.

"I'm the haid of ouah family. It's my duty—" He stopped, and then added—"I'll give yo' five minutes to say yo' prayers."

Tom, sitting in the sand, arms clasping his knees, leaned back to look up more easily at the figure across the fire. The flames threw the feudist's thin mouth and high-bridged nose into sharp relief. The rest of the face remained in shadow. Connell's gray army hat sat low on his pinched-in temples. He seemed curiously old and gnarled. He sloughed off his soldierly erectness. His shoulders stooped so that his arms hung loosely in front of him, the pose of the mountaineer who climbs habitually steep trails.

"Never mind the five minutes," replied Tom. "I done been expectin' you. I suppose I'm as ready as I'll ever be. Go ahead and shoot."

The reply added to Connell's perplexity. He resented an alien something in the other's manner. McKay should have been pale and wordless, drawing on his reserves of upland fatalism to aid him creditably over the threshold of this greatest of all crises. He should have been as dangerously alert as a rattlesnake, to snatch at a hidden weapon and die fighting, doing what damage he could before he passed out.

But Tom displayed no such conventional reaction. He seemed almost at his ease. He leaned back without tensity. The hands clasping his thin knees did not tremble. He, why he—Connell churned around in his consciousness to express the thought. Why, plague take it, the skunk done acted as if he had the upper hand; as if he knew he could win, and was grinnin' like a coon at the thought of turning the tables.

That seemed absurd, of course. It must be absurd. What could he do? He had no weapon, made no effort to get one. The feudist fought against the unsettlement of so weird an attitude. He shrugged, clapped the stock of the rifle against his hip, and cocked the weapon.

"I'm a-goin' to shoot," he retorted, doggedly.

"Yo' shore talk a lot about it," taunted McKay.

Connell thrust his arms slightly forward so that he could steady the butt of the rifle between his right elbow and his side. Point blank range; no need to bring it to his shoulder. By stooping a little more he could almost touch McKay with the muzzle. His forefinger curled around the trigger.

And then he found suddenly that he could not fire. Bewildering thoughts nagged him and diverted him from his purpose. He remembered, without meaning to do so, how they scorned him in the cantonment because he jumped on a boxing-partner when he was down; how they talked about fair play and sportsmanship and eyed him with smiling contempt. He recalled his own mystification at football players who would help a dazed opponent to his feet, joke with him, pat him on the back, and wait until he recovered fully before resuming play.

His cheeks burned uncomfortably under the memory of the stinging gibes of the Camp Kearny medico, who denied he earned the medal which he wore; who called him a coward; who looked at him as if he were beneath contempt, all because he had done or had tried to do, what feud law commanded him to do, wipe out an enemy as expeditiously as possible. And that same medico, that Doc Blatchford, he had talked about fair play too, about giving the other fellow a chance!

He eyed McKay with worried malignancy.

"Say, ain't yo' got a gun?"

"Shore have." Tom spoke indifferently, and tipped his head toward his ancient car, dimly outlined against the cañon wall behind him.

"Well, git it," commanded Connell, bruskly. "I'm a-goin' to give yo' a show. Yo' kin holler when yo' find it. An' start shootin'. That gives yo' as good a chance as me."

McKay shook his head.

"I don't aim to do no mo' feudin'. If I wanted to kill yo' I could have laid out in them bushes and plugged yo' as yo' came to the fiah." Anger and bewilderment made a playground of Connell's face. He

raised his left hand from the rifle to gesticulate

"You got to!" he declared, fiercely. "I aim to kill yo', but I cain't while yo' set there grinnin' like a bobcat! Git yo' gun. That's mo'n yo' pap let my pap do."

"I don't aim to," came the light, though stubborn reply.

The impasse ground Connell as if between sliding rocks. He yearned to kill McKay as he sat; yearned, and felt himself justified. But he could not bring himself to fire. Because he felt the accusing eyes of his comrades upon him, some of them long since closed, in France. They would not understand, the men behind those eyes. They would look contempt and worse, pity, at him as long as he lived.

"Yo' —— coward!" he snarled furiously, even as his right thumb carefully let down the hammer of the rifle. "Afraid—that's whut yo' air. You don't dast stand up an fight me. Yo' goin' to make me leave my pap onrevenged. Yo' goin' to send me back to Hawkins to be laughed at."

Tom stretched and yawned. But he trembled with the released strain, and his voice caught.

"Yo' don't need to go back to Hawkins," he pointed out shakily. "Too bad I'm a-disobligin' yo', but I cain't do no mo' feudin'. I just—cain't. It's so—so plumb useless-like."

Leaning on the rifle, both hands covering its muzzle, the darkling Jud regarded him.

"I hope yo' die an' the coyotes eat you. I hope you go back to Hawkins County so the Connells, an' the Brules, an' the Baylisses, an' the Waddys, gits a chance at you. I wish to —— I could kill you. But I cain't. I don't want to see yo' no mo'—never. Yo' shore do make me mad!"

With this abrading speech he turned to mingle with the lonesome army of Joshua trees, raising mute and amorphous arms against the stars.

"Hold on, Connell." Tom raised his voice a little and fumbled in the pocket of his sweater.

"Got something to show you." The feudist came back, reluctantly and suspiciously, and reached down to take the crumpled bit of paper extended to him.

He bent lower, smoothing it, and held it slantingly so the firelight would illumine it. As he read the brief paragraph a change came over him. He shrank into himself, as if a weight crushed him from above. The color leaked out of his face. His mouth fell open and his tongue protruded.

His nostrils widened and whitened to membraneous delicacy. He drew in long, irregular breaths, with something of the hoarse and complaining sound of a close-fitting leather plunger in the throat of a dry pump. His wide hands trembled in agitation so uncontrollable that the frayed paper tore halfway across.

The item, datelined Reno, merely stated that the Supreme Court had rendered a decision upholding an act of the last preceding legislature, which provided a new method of capital punishment in Nevada. Hereafter a prisoner condemned to death in the State, would be strapped in a chair and suffocated by lethal gas.

Gradually the spasm of blighting fear passed. Connell pushed back his campaign hat and wiped the cold, thick dew from his forehead.

"Le—lethal gas," he murmured hoarsely. "They jest aim to—to choke a man to death."

He thrust a forefinger inside the neckband of his flannel shirt and pulled so violently that the top button tore from its fastenings. He put his right elbow on the muzzle of his rifle and, leaning heavily on it for support looked down into Tom's upturned face.

"Yo' done figgered to git even after I killed you," he observed, a painful smile coming to his stiff lips.

Tom nodded.

"Yo' made me so blame sick o' feudin' I couldn't see no use in dodgin' yo' any longer. So when I read whut this State would do to yo' foh killin' me, why, I come.

"This here McGlinchey, who runs the Circle C, is a dep'ty sheriff. I done tol' him all about yo' and whut yo' looked like. An' I made him promise ef I missed a day in drivin' oveh for vittles to come here.

"I 'lowed he'd find me plumb full o' lead. And it shouldn't be so hard to find you. Then —" he flipped a thumb at the torn bit of paper which Connell still held.

The feudist wadded it viciously and thrust the little ball into the heart of the ebbing fire.

"Yo' shore put me in a hole," he grumbled. "If yo' die from this here gassin', even, they'll be a-layin' it on to me." He glared accusingly at Tom. "Yo' ain't

showin' no sense, settin' roun' and lettin' that measly little fire go out."

He propped his rifle against a rock.

"I'll fetch my flivver from over yonder a piece." Pessimistically he shook his head. "——, I got to tend to things if ye' won't tend to 'em yo'se'f! Lazy an' triflin' an' shif'less—git to bed!"

"Aw, it ain't so late," protested Tom, in the tones of the small boy who knows he is in the wrong but hopes to conceal his knowledge. Nevertheless he rose.

SALT AS CURRENCY IN 1780

by **Arthur Woodward**

GREAT was the privation of the Continental forces as they lay in their winter encampment at Morristown, New Jersey, in the year 1780. From the lowest private, huddling about his scanty fire muttering—"No pay; no clothes; no provisions; no rum," to the commander-in-chief himself was felt the pinch of privation and want.

The paper money issued by the Continental Congress had fallen to such a degree that very few, except the most ardent patriots would accept it. Those who had gold and silver specie hoarded it and produced it only on extreme occasions of absolute necessity. Consequently a system of barter sprang up and among the articles most in demand were salt, and foreign made dry-goods. It is related that the unfortunate Andre, when captured, offered his captors any amount they would name in cash or dry-goods instead of his watch as has popularly been supposed was the case.

Even General Washington's table was supplied with fresh provisions obtained from the hard-headed farmers of New Jersey by his housekeeper, Mrs. Thompson, "a very worthy Irish woman," according to Dr. Thatcher, a surgeon in the Continental Army, through the medium of salt, which was then worth eight dollars a bushel.

It appears that when the supply of fresh vegetables and other little delicacies with which Mrs. Thompson had been supplying the general, gave out, the good woman was greatly perturbed and went to Washington saying—

"We have nothing but rations to cook, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Thompson," replied Washington, "you must then cook the rations, for I have not one farthing to give you."

The housekeeper turned to leave, then struck by a sudden thought said—

"If you please, sir, let one of the gentlemen give me an order for six bushels of salt."

"Six bushels of salt?" repeated Washington somewhat surprized. "For what, may I ask?"

"To preserve the fresh beef I draw for rations," responded Mrs. Thompson.

Lieutenant Colfax, one of Washington's aides wrote out the order and the next day the table at headquarters was amply provided. Supposing Mrs. Thompson had spent some of her hard-earned savings to supply him with more appetizing food, Washington sent for her, saying he was sorry she had expended her own money when she knew it could not be repaid, and it is related that the warm-hearted woman replied:

"Dear sir, it is always darkest just before daylight and I hope your Excellency will forgive me for bartering the salt for other necessaries which are now on the table."

It is quite evident that Washington forgave her "white lie" for in his account book under the date of September, 1781, we find this entry:

"To Household Expenses from the close of Major Gibb's Acct. Nov. 21, 1780, till the commencement of them by Lt. Colfax the 6 of Sept. 1781—amounts from the best acc'ts. and Estimates that can be had and from reccolection (exclusive of what was obtained by bartering a little Salt which was put into the hands of the Housekeeper for that purpose) to at least 800 pounds, 'Lawful' money."

The Bush Lopers

A Five-Part Story—Part One

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Homesteaders," "Iroquois! Iroquois!" etc.

FOREWORD

ENGLAND wrested New Netherlands from the Dutch, the first white settlers on the Hudson River, but remained blind to the strategic importance of the Niagara River and its adjacent territory. The commercial value of the Hudson, as the then key river of the continent, depended upon its being hooked up with the Niagara and the Great Lakes.

But if England were slow to perceive the wisdom of dominating the Niagara she was wise enough to follow the example of the Dutch in her treatment of the Iroquois. With the Niagara frontier remaining an unappreciated asset England might hopelessly have lagged behind in the race for supremacy had not the French also neglected to utilize the Niagara as the direct road to the beaver trade, the *ne plus ultra* of all commercial rivalry in the New World. Fortunately for the tardy awakening of England this short river was considered for years by New France more as a part of a hard road to the Ohio than as the most logical route to the western lakes.

Beaver must have been very plentiful in the East in the first days of the white men's coming. The Indians used them for food and robes, but there was no such wholesale killing as marked the advent of the fur traders. They abounded in the tributaries to the St. Lawrence. In 1535 there was an Iroquois village on a large island, the very name of which, "Hochelaga," or "The Place of the Beaver Dam," suggests an undiminished supply of the animal.

But once Cartier came up the St. Lawrence to name the island Mount Royal and to be hospitably entertained at Hochelaga, both beaver and Indian were to learn how rapidly white men can write commercial history when seeking gain. New France was blind to the value of her cod fisheries and believed her prosperity depended on the beaver trade.

Just as the King was France, so the Governor was New France. Failing to colonize the country, New France was hopelessly handicapped. And yet so strong was her tenacity, so great her quality of building much out of little, that she successfully rivaled her mighty opponent for more than a century.

Had France perceived the inexhaustible gold mine in her fisheries New France might have endured longer. Had she followed the colonization methods of England history might read differently today. But she was compelled to heed the imperious bidding of Louis the Fourteenth, who was ever jealous of any power or prosperity which did not emanate from the throne; and New France was never permitted to be self-dependent.

Among the different peoples in the

"The Bush Lopers," Copyright, 1925, by Hugh Pendexter.

English colonies were Dutch, Swedes, Huguenots, English, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, Scotch-Irish and Palatines. Each of these races indulged in its own notions as to religious worship. In New France were Catholic French, busily building churches, schools and hospitals before there were people to profit by the same.

So great was the scarcity of women in New France in 1665, aside from the cloistered nuns, that Colbert, encouraged by the king, selected a hundred from the refuge hospitals of Paris and Lyons, called them "the King's Girls" and sent them over to be mated with soldiers and settlers. The supply was doubled the next year; and still Quebec remained peopled largely by men.

With only one Church in New France it yet had its troubles. Sulpicians and Recollets put aside their jealousies at times to strive against the Jesuits, who were endeavoring to control both State and Church. A very heavy millstone tied fast to the northern colony was the feudal system, with the common people paying rents on St. Martin's Day to the seigneur, who held his lands of the king.

Those who worked the land found life hard and empty of promise. The *noblesse*, composed of broken gentlemen from France and soldiers from the disbanded regiment of Carignan-Salières, depended on the king for all they received, while being in no way suited to the magnificent but undeveloped country.

It naturally resulted that sons of farmers, wearying of tending crops during the short summer with the fear of the Iroquois ever upon them, took to the woods. Sons of seigneurs, unused to husbandry, likewise heard the wilderness calling to them. Many found life more endurable if lived with the Indians instead of in ceaseless combat with them. Many white men turned red in habits and manners, and even in thought. But red men refused to turn white.

The unfortunate La Salle formally took possession of the Mississippi and Arkansas, but never of the Niagara country. In 1671 France held Acadia and took possession of all the continent from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Pacific to Lakes Huron and Superior. This left a strip along the Atlantic coast for England's colonies, and a vigorously disputed right to the Niagara region.

If New France lagged in cementing her hold on Niagara she was very forward in learning about the lakes country. Champlain was the first white man *known* to have embarked on any of the Great Lakes; and his adventure consisted of crossing the eastern end of Ontario. Probably his interpreter, Etienne Brule, preceded him by two or three weeks. Father Dallion might be listed as the first trader on the Niagara peninsula because of his going there and exchanging a few knives for the privilege of being adopted as the son of Souharissen, chief of the Neuter Nation. Much has been written of La Salle's presence on the Niagara and at the great cataract, yet the river and falls were mapped thirteen years before he went there.

Father Jérôme Lallement appears to have been the first Frenchman to realize the vital importance of French control of the Niagara country. Nearly twoscore years passed after Champlain crossed Ontario (1615) before there is adequate proof of another white man on Ontario. Father Simon La Moine paddled his canoe into the lake in 1654 on his way to the Onondagas.

Neither priest nor trader is known to have traveled to Lake Huron by the way of Niagara until 1669. Prior to this year all recorded trips to the Huron country was by the Ottawa River route.

Among the famous Frenchmen who followed the Ottawa were Nicolet in 1634; Jogues and Raymbault in 1641; Raddison and Groseilliers, possibly in 1654, but certainly in 1656; Father René Menard in 1660; Father Allouez in 1665; Marquette in 1668; and Joliet in 1669.

Besides these there were the unnamed adventurers, *noblesse* and the plain people, who went and, if fortunate, returned by that route. This avoidance of the more direct Niagara route was due to the hostility of the Iroquois south of Ontario and to the friendship of the Algonquin tribes along the Ottawa and Nipissing paths.

La Salle, De Casson and Galines were the first Europeans *known* to have reached the Niagara by Ontario. The first white man known to pass through Lake Erie was Joliet; and, unlike the other Great Lakes, Erie was discovered from the westward. Three years before La Salle built the ill-fated *Griffon* on the upper Niagara, the river and lakes had been described by Charles La Chesnaye, the

Quebec trader, who (1676) was the first to use the modern spelling of Niagara.*

The first structure built on the Niagara by a white man was the storehouse and palisade erected by Father Hennepin in 1678. A Seneca woman was the first of her sex to play a part in the history of the river. She betrayed to her French lover the Senecas' plot to destroy the *Griffon*.

So for more than half a century France neglected the river, for the control of which she was to wage incessant war once England awakened to its importance. But in all the annals of those fifty years French names alone are connected with that region. Yet not until 1669 did France make an effort to take formal possession of the country. She had delayed too long.

WHEN in 1609 Champlain demonstrated the power of his "fire sticks" and pleased his Hurons by killing two Mohawk chiefs he cost Louis the Magnificent his only chance of winning a most wonderful empire. The hatred against the French, ingrained in the Iroquois from that fateful July day, was never to die out, although Frenchmen as individuals, warriors and priests, found favor at times with the various nations.

From 1640 to 1700 there was almost constant warfare between New France and the Iroquois. M. Courcelles invaded the Mohawk country in 1665 and accomplished nothing beyond earning more ill will. A year later M. de Tracey burned the principal village of the Mohawks on Scoharie Creek. M. La Barre attempted to attack the Iroquois in 1684 and was glad to agree to an armistice at La Famine, or Hungry Bay, thereby greatly angering his Western allies whom he had urgently summoned but did not use. Between these futile efforts the Iroquois were ever striking back and at times were carrying death to the Island of Montreal.

Then it was Dongan, Irish Catholic, Governor of New York, against Denonville, French Catholic and Governor of New France. Dongan's bold plans for serving his king were set at naught by the Treaty of Neutrality signed at Whitehall. This agreement tied his hands while leaving Denonville free to act and attack the Iroquois.

In following their subtle policy of playing English against French the Iroquois did not always find themselves well situated. When Du Lhut, La Durantaye and Perrot successfully extended the French trade to the remote Assiniboin and Sioux the Long House was filled with alarm. They saw themselves walled in by nations submitting to the influence of France. They were masters at intrigue and the most warlike confederacy on the continent.

They struck ferociously to exterminate all tribes having a trade alliance with the French. Their first move was a destructive raid into the far-off Illinois country. Denonville could not remain quiet. La Barre's fiasco had degraded the French in the estimation of some Western tribes. The mischief must be undone and the lost prestige recovered. It was known in the English colonies and among the red nations that Denonville would attempt to break down the Western Door of the Long House, probably during the summer of 1687.

Through all these shiftings of frontier tragedies move black and gray robes. These priests suffered indescribable hardships to carry the message of their Church to the savages. They risked hideous torture on entering a wilderness village. They secured converts and established friendships with red men, and also did they die tragically for their faith. On and off the stage calmly walked Brebeuf, Lalement, Garnier and Jogues—to mention but four who were destroyed by those they would help.

Always conspicuous in the panorama of those lost days are the *coureurs de bois* legitimately engaged in the fur trade but often hostile in spirit toward the "Farmer of the Beaver."[1] Their history is filled with the greatest courage, terrible hardships and most reckless adventuring. The routine of their lives took them from Montreal up the Ottawa to the Upper Lakes, and in later days by the way of the Niagara portage—"La Grande Traverse." More than a century and a half has passed since the last of those indomitable ones made the Last Traverse, yet dramatic bits of their daring are preserved in ancient documents.

And such a daring! Iroquois and even some of France's red allies were not averse to putting a Frenchman into the kettle, even as the Iroquois often threatened to do

*"*Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York,*" contain thirty-nine different spellings of "Niagara."

[1] The monopolist who purchased from the king the exclusive right to buy peltry of traders at a price fixed by the Government. The English prices were much higher.

with Onontio.* More sharply outlined are the glimpses of Champlain, the Sieur La Salle, and of Henry de Tonty, the "Man with the Iron Hand" and many others who served as King Louis' gallant Captains of the West.

While royal masters pretended to be at peace murder was common, and open strife or stealthy warfare was being carried on around the inland seas. And what can be said of those who traded without a license, the outlawed *coureurs de bois* who risked a shameful branding of the fleur-de-lis on the cheek or a life sentence to the galleys? How can history deal justly with those Bush Lopers, who were safe with neither red men nor white and who took the greatest hazards unsustained by religious zeal and contrary to the laws of New France?

The name of Carcajou will not be found in any lists of those "outlaws;" and yet he lived in hundreds of such reckless spirits. He was on the Lower Mississippi. He was on the Missouri. He raided and burned at the command of France along the northern boundary of New England. He came to aid La Barre in "the Army of the South" in 1684. He came again to Niagara to aid Denonville. He was here; he was there, often a furtive figure.

He was insolent, audacious, reckless and law-breaking. He was high of heart; he was cunning, and yet at times as simple as a child. He swarmed from the Upper Lakes when New France needed him and gave him safe conduct for a brief time. Then he vanished into the wilderness to die anonymously. He feared nothing that walked on two or four legs, could he have a semblance of a chance.

Although there may have been none to carry the name of Carcajou there were many who had his spirit. And if today the tonnage of the Great Lakes surpasses all the ocean-carrying of the seventh century then surely those sometimes wicked and always irresponsible Carcajous had some part in preparing the way.

CHAPTER I

AT THE NIAGARA PORTAGE

FOR hours clouds of pigeons shut out the blue of the early April sky as Carcajou, the fugitive, paddled steadily to make the grand traverse ahead of the inevitable pursuit. He had traveled afoot up the St. Lawrence from Quebec and had evidenced his audacious spirit by stealing a birch at Fort Frontenac* while the small garrison was welcoming a war-band of Missisauga Indians, just returned from an expedition against the Cherokees. He believed he had a long lead over Governor Denonville's agents, yet the forest-hemmed Ontario in the spring of this eventful year, 1687, would be buffeted by contrary winds, and the voyager who paddled a birch must lengthen his journey by keeping close to the coast.

Carcajou was so called by his fellow *coureurs-de-bois* because he was believed to possess the cunning and ferocity of that trap-robber, the wolverene. But there was no savagery in his dark eyes, and only exultation in his heart, as he plied the paddle and thanked the saints he had a birch instead of a heavy elm canoe of the Iroquois.

At last the rafts of pigeons floated below the horizon, and the sun and blue heavens returned. The northeast wind was sharp with the breath of unmelted snow-fields and had a tang that kept a man up to his best. Carcajou, however, needed no stimulus beyond the belief that somewhere down the river Raymond Desbergères and a squad of soldiers were hastening to overtake him.

At Anse de la Famine, a favorite camping ground of French and Indians on the south shore, he was forced to land by the strong wind. He wandered among the red and white oaks and with the absorbing interest of a boy admired the huge eagles that nested there. Nor was his curiosity satisfied until he had climbed a tree and thrown down a nest consisting of a cartload of wood. When the wind fell he resumed his flight.

He expected that Desbergères would follow up the lake in a brigantine, secured at Frontenac, but would give the south shore a wide berth. The climax of the chase would come at the portage of the Niagara. At Rivière des Sables† he paused only long enough to talk with a Seneca man whom he called "Chaudière Noire" (Black Kettle)‡ and who greeted him as a friend, but warned him to avoid any young men of the

*The Iroquois name for governors of Canada, beginning with Montmagny.

*Site of modern Kingston. Also often called Cataraqui by French and English after the Indian name. Fifty-one different spellings of the Indian name have come to my notice.

†Irondequoit Bay, N. Y.

‡Not to be confused with celebrated Mohawk chief similarly called.

Seneca nation. Black Kettle admired Carcajou for a certain act committed in Quebec several years before. This mutual liking, however, would not prevent a young and ambitious Iroquois from taking the Frenchman's scalp.

"My brother is early at the bay," said Carcajou. "Does he think to catch fish?"

"There is a man coming who is said to be dead. He will be told to move on."

Carcajou did not probe beneath this ambiguous statement, knowing full well how useless it would be to ask for what was not volunteered. After a pause Black Kettle continued:

"My brother has slept in my house many times when carrying beaver to Albany. Now it is a bad time to sleep. Corlaer's* men will be here soon."

"Your younger brother does not fear Corlaer's men. They are glad to see him," said Carcajou.

"The men coming are going after beaver. They will not let Onontio's bad son travel ahead to say they are coming. There are twenty-nine white men, three Mohawks and two Mohicans."

"These Bostonnais carry trade goods to the Upper Lakes?" mused Carcajou. "Who is their chief?"

"The man called Rooseboom."

"Captain Rooseboom! His second try at stealing our trade! He'll find himself in a kettle some day," fiercely prophesied Carcajou. "My elder brother talks wisdom. Onontio's son must travel fast."

He set out immediately, wondering at Captain Rooseboom's daring in trying to repeat his trading coup of two years back. And as he skirted the shore he also endeavored to guess the meaning of Black Kettle's statement about a man who was "said to be dead."

Of major importance, however, was the news of the Rooseboom party. This was news that should be carried to the West at once. And Carcajou's nimble mind began devising a scheme whereby he might act as messenger and gain favor with Durantaye, or Du Lhut, or Perrot, commandants of the Upper Lake posts. The lake was smooth as glass, and he was delayed but one day by contrary winds. For part of a night he was compelled to wait at the Bay of the Senecas.†

There was a hard frost the night he abandoned his canoe at the mouth of the Niagara. The trees were scarcely beginning to bud. Ice formed in still pools. But Carcajou warmed himself by a small fire, there being no sign of a brigantine at the river.

For the first time since quitting Quebec the fugitive permitted himself to relax and make up some sleep. After he had eaten he started up the portage path and did not pause to rest until the fourteen miles of hard traveling was completed and the hollow rumbling of the mighty cataract was behind him. Then he rested and ate dried meat and stared, fascinated, at the smoke of the falls. He was duly grateful that no Iroquois had attacked him while he was surmounting the three hills of the portage. Although the clean, open groves of huge oaks permitted an enemy to be seen at a distance of six hundred paces a man was in no position for defense when carrying a pack and hurrying up the rough way.

But Carcajou was not one to give all credit even to the saints. He was very much of an egotist. Now that he believed he had passed the crest of danger he could not refrain from proudly declaring aloud:

"I am Carcajou. Name of a name! What's in a name? I am a very brave wolverene. I am a very wise wolverene. I take the name of a trap-robber and exalt it. Let the pigs waddle after me. I laugh at them."

Then he became alert and ceased his self-praise as some small animal made a rustling in the dead oak leaves. Ever since the former governor, La Barre, foolishly "ordered" the Iroquois to seize and confiscate all goods and furs of those not possessing his Excellency's passport the Senecas had taken to lurking along the portage.

Satisfied that he was in no danger, Carcajou grinned broadly in pleased recollection of the first result of La Barre's move to stop *coureurs de bois* from carrying their trade to Albany. For it was La Chesnaye, the Quebec trader, whose complaint prompted the ill-advised order, who was the first to suffer. Two canoe loads of furs had been seized and retained by the Senecas when his *engagés* were unable to show their passports.

"Caught in his own trap," chuckled

*Corlaer, Indian name for governors of New York.
†Long, or Buck's Pond, Monroe County, N. Y.

Carcajou. "They never shall say that of me."

Baked and tanned to the color of a Huron, there would have been but little to distinguish this outlawed *coureur de bois* from a savage if it had not been for his whimsical smile and the vivacity of his attire. While none could be ahead of the American Indian in love of bright colors, and while no white belle of Quebec or Montreal could be more fond of gazing into a looking glass, the savage at the best could play the beau only by piecemeal. Only a chief could expect to wear a laced hat and a bright coat at the same time. To procure a cheap trade musket the Indian must pay in beaver, laid flat and piled as high as the muzzle. And trade muskets were made very long.

Carcajou was always reminiscently resplendent. Now that he had come direct from Quebec he was unusually gay; and when he came to unruffled water he paused to admire his reflection.

"My son," he told the dark face peering up from a quiet pool, "King Louis himself would be proud of you."

A red cloth with large white dots served as a head covering and was worn from vanity rather than as a protection. Despite the exigence of hurried travel he was wearing one of his newly acquired white shirts and had gone without his blanket when the wind was biting cold. For the time being his serviceable *mitasses** were in the pack so that he might enjoy long breeches of yellow, sprinkled with tiny red stars. These were stuffed into the tops of his moccasins, about the only part of his original forest garb he had retained. Even his belt was new and gaily embroidered. The skinning-knife, ax and gun were the same weapons he had brought from the West. The gun was a snaphaunce musket, five feet long and shooting twelve balls to the pound. The brass mountings were brightly polished, and in the fine-grained beech woodwork were set "lucky" silver stars and half moons.

Believing the race was won, Carcajou could discover no better subject for thought than self. He halted at another water mirror and assured his image:

"Now you have given them something new to talk about at Quebec and Montreal. Ah, thou reckless one! Quebec need not wait for the next King's ship to bring a year's supply of stale gossip. How they will chatter! *Pardi!* How the Chevalier* is raving now he knows Carcajou has escaped and had the effrontery to steal a birch from Frontenac! I would like to be a hawk and listen to him. Well, if they will outlaw a brave man they must expect to pay a brave price."

Carcajou's reason for risking capture by visiting Quebec was the soul-urge to attend mass and go to confession. He

could have hunted up Father Allouez somewhere among the Northwest tribes and have bared his soul. He had done this for several years.

But alongside his duty as a good Catholic was the yearning to look on Quebec once more. The fathers were lenient with a son who had traveled from Superior to confess his sins, but a rival in an old love-affair had recognized him and had basely spread the alarm.

"*Sapristi!*" growled Carcajou on reaching this phase of his late experience. "I should have brought away the crown of his head, *à la Huron.* Too tame and warm of heart for a wolverene. May the saints inspire the false madame to make it hot as —— for the pig!"

Being emotional, he quickly forgot the betrayer so that he might review and sigh over those other visits to Quebec when he was inside the law. Such days and nights! How he and his wild companions, scarcely less wild than their red companions, had filled the streets with bacchanal songs and war-whoops and much fighting!

He grew quite sad in contemplating the past, and only by viewing his gay

*Mitasses; i.e., leggings. Borrowed from the Algonquin by *coureurs de bois.*

*De Troyes, commandant on the Niagara under Governor Denonville.

appearance in the smooth water of a little creek* just above the end of the portage path did he return to his natural gaiety.

He had realized the risk he ran in carrying an illicit trade to the English or their agents. Both his eyes were open when he succumbed to the better price paid by the Albany merchants. Some Frenchmen not only had carried their trade but also their allegiance to New York Province and now possessed passports signed by Governor Dongan.

The Wolverene abhorred such expatriation. From his viewpoint it smacked of cowardice. He would break trade laws; many *coureurs de bois* and Government officials did the same. If justice were measured out impartially there were sons of *seigneurs* and men in high places who would wear the *fleur-de-lis* on one cheek. If the *noblesse* and officials fattened their pockets at the expense of Louis the Magnificent what was to be expected of a simple *habitant?* Carcajou would ask himself the question with his tongue in his cheek. As a fact he had a poor opinion of many of the *noblesse* and of some officials Undoubtedly he was in the way of becoming an egotist.

Yet with all his shortcomings he never forgot he was a son of New France. Born in Quebec nearly thirty years before, he felt he was closer to the country than those court favorites who came over from France to repair broken fortunes. His people were simple honest folks who scrupulously paid the *cens et rente* on St. Martin's Day. These same parents had bequeathed to the son an improvident and wasteful nature. They lived very frugally and sold their eggs and poultry that they might have money for brandy and gay clothes. Carcajou, having nothing to sell, became a bush loper to indulge his love for raiment and his taste for brandy.

In all other matters he was loyal. They might have him at the Round Table of the Superior Council in the antechamber in Fort Louis of a Monday without diminishing his love for Quebec. Some unlucky day he might find himself at the table, the governor presiding, flanked by the bishop and the intendant; nevertheless he would continue very jealous of the town's good name.

*Gill Creek.

Yet there were degrees in his loyalty. Quebec and New France were synonymous.

Montreal was far superior to any town in the English colonies; still he was ready to fight if any one presumed to contend that Montreal was favored over the lower town in climate, outlook, pretty girls or anything. Once he had fought ferociously with a *coureur de bois* for saying the mosquitoes bit more savagely at Montreal than at Quebec. That was when he first took to the bush and was striving against homesickness.

He was very angry because Marion La Fontaine had quit New France to take service under Dongan. La Fontaine had been guide and interpreter for Captain Rooseboom's first trading venture to the Upper Lakes.

"Let him be careful he does not come with the captain this trip," growled Carcajou. "The rascal!"

Unfortunately New France did not reward for the sins one did not commit; therefore Carcajou had every reason to believe he would be pursued with an order for his arrest even to Mackinac, to La Baye des Puants,* or to the "Narrows."†

His talk with Black Kettle suggested a possible defense to any accusation that might overtake him. The messenger who carried word to the Captains of the West of Rooseboom's coming surely would be doing king and governor an excellent service. But this rôle would be impossible did Desbergères capture Rooseboom's party before it made Lake Erie. Therefore he hoped Rooseboom would escape premature capture.

His record, however, was a big obstacle. If he only could convince the commandants he had foresworn his wicked ways and lived only to promote the prosperity of New France!

He would prefer being judged by Nicolas Perrot, governor-general of the western country until made a subordinate to Durantaye, now stationed at Mackinac. Perrot had been the greatest of the *coureurs de bois*. He was a wise man in the woods. He understood his red allies and never thoroughly trusted them. He would be quicker to sympathize with an erring woods-runner, provided the latter did him a service.

Perrot was the outstanding figure in La

*The French never called it Green Bay. †Detroit.

Barre's humiliating attempt to punish the Iroquois in 1684. He had raised "the Army of the South" and had induced hordes of savages to paint for war and come to Niagara, only to find La Barre had concluded a burlesque of a peace with the Long House. During that strenuous summer he had overlooked Carcajou's lawlessness and had been glad to use him.

"He would be an ingrate to punish the bearer of important news," argued Carcajou. "He will remember I came with his 'army' to this very portage. He is not heartless. He must receive me kindly. But first I will send him a talk by another man. A wolverene does not jump into a trap because he thinks it's sprung.

"If my messenger brings back a black belt there's enough bush to hide all the rascals in high places who ever stole from his gracious Majesty. Ah, those English profits! How to make Perrot believe I've foresworn my wicked ways. Come, come, thick-head! You must do some thinking. To go running ahead of Rooseboom, who may never reach the Erie, is not enough. I must show with belts and on the pipe that I have reformed. I carry back no trade goods; that's in my favor. But what if the Chevalier sends word I had to run too fast to carry anything besides my gun and blankets?"

THE air was cold. The tinkling music of spring rivulets exulting in their freedom filled the country. Carcajou quickened his pace and slackened it none until he reached Cayuga Creek on the Little Niagara and opposite to Cayuga Island. This was the spot where Henry de Tonty, Italian knight faithfully serving France, built the *Griffon* for La Salle in the winter and spring of 1679. Chips left by the ship carpenters' axes were only partly concealed by bush-growth. Carcajou sat down on a stump where the bushes sheltered him from the wind and renewed his efforts to build up a plausible story.

There was the coming war between Denonville and the Iroquois. That ought to be made to serve his turn. In his flight up the river he had learned from a *habitant* at Three Rivers that two hundred birches were to be ready for early summer, and as many *bateaux*. It was commonly expected by forest folk that Denonville would strive to win back the prestige New France had lost under La Barre.

"Well, well!" impatiently muttered Carcajou, wrinkling his dark brows. "Say he does carry a fight to the Iroquois and takes a few crowns off their heads. What of it? Then the Iroquois will pour down the river and burn and kill around Montreal. If Denonville would but listen to me! I'd tell him things. A strong fort here on the Niagara, and a strong garrison at Frontenac. Chambly should be balanced by a strong post some six leagues below Tonihata* where not a muskrat could swim down the river without being seen. No. It would be better to advise him to offer a calumet to the Iroquois and send them more missionaries. Pig's head to forget that Father Lamberville is living with the Onondagas and will send word to Quebec about Captain Rooseboom and his party!

"That cooks the captain. I must find some other talk before I can face Perrot or Durantaye. My head aches with trying to think."

Disgusted by his failure to think up a scheme which would give him safe conduct in and out of the Western posts, he rose and moved along the path. He had not advanced far when a gun banged in some bushes and a bullet whirred close to his head.

With the quickness of a wolverene the Canadian dropped behind a log. He did not care to empty his gun until sure of what he was shooting at, for it took some time to reload the piece. Swiftly crawling to the end of the log, he reconnoitered through a screen of dead grass and saw the tops of the bare branches move more than the north wind could be accountable for. The hidden foe was trying to secure a position that would permit a flank attack.

Carcajou placed his gay headcovering over a forked branch and slowly elevated it to the top of the log, then withdrew it. He shifted his position a few feet and raised it again. It was so old a trick that he scarcely dared to hope it would deceive, but after he had cunningly repeated the maneuver several times the gun boomed again; and with the report Carcajou was over the log, whooping ferociously, and was crashing into the bush-growth and was thrusting the muzzle of his musket against the breast of a white man.

"Don't shoot!" cried the man in English. He repeated it in French.

*Grenadier Island.

"Our gracious masters must be loving each other again by the way you salute me," jeered Carcajou, increasing the pressure on the trigger.

"I took you for a savage! Don't shoot!" exclaimed the other. "My gracious master, through this man Dongan, will give ten pounds for my scalp. So if you must shoot, save my hair."

"Droll!" And Carcajou showed his white teeth in a grin. "So thoughtful of money! You must be a Bostonnais."

Reaching forth his left hand he plucked a knife and ax from the man's belt and commanded:

"Sit down, M'sieur Bostonnais. Ten pounds is ten pounds. *Ma foi!* More than two hundred livres! What is the matter? Are you made of gold? Keep still. Let me talk. I have talked to myself till I'm sick. Your hair will be worth just as much if we talk a bit before I kill you. What's the matter with you? Why don't you speak? How long since Dongan pays for English hair?"

And he crouched on his heels while the other sat with his legs extended before him.

"I am Dutch," sullenly replied the man.

"My people were at Manhattan before there were any English on the Hudson. It is the province of New York now by treaty rather than by population. I was trying to escape to the Upper Lakes when I saw your turban and thought you were a Seneca trailing me. My name is Dirk Brouwer. Either shoot or let me stand up. The ground is cold."

Carcajou thought rapidly.

"M'sieur is followed?" he asked.

"I am followed."

Carcajou tilted his head and eyed him sharply, then remarked:

"This is not a confessional. Does m'sieur care to open a talk of not more than one belt?"

"I never knew a Frenchman who would talk on anything but beaver," bitterly replied Brouwer. Carcajou grinned in appreciation. "I am wanted for smuggling English goods to Montreal traders, who can pay our price and yet make a handsome profit off the Indians. While his Excellency should be angry with the Albany merchants for stripping their shelves he forgets them and hunts the smugglers."

"Upon my faith! That is very sad," mocked Carcajou. "You are direct from Albany?"

"I spent the winter with the Senecas in a town on the river Casconchiagon.* There is a Huron man there married to a Seneca woman. He was taken prisoner when a young boy. Just before the ice broke up he told me Dongan was to send men to take me to Albany. A few days ago he woke me in the night and said the men were coming. He led me to a canoe and went with me as far as the lake."

"*Le diable m'emporte!* Here's a queer one! Some one whispers to him in the night and he runs. Bostonnais are hunting for him, but he thought I was a Seneca and banged at me."

"Dongan's men can not take men from the Seneca country if the Senecas say no. They depend on the Senecas to catch me. It is the Senecas I fear; not white men."

"You speak French well," mused Carcajou, his quick wits already to utilize the encounter to his advantage.

"I prefer it to English," said Brouwer. "I have reminded you the ground is cold and damp."

"It is at this time of the year," murmured Carcajou.

His gaze wandered to Brouwer's gun, and he became greedy. The barrel was thirty-six inches long, or eight inches shorter than the snaphaunce. He remarked—

"M'sieur Runaway loaded so quick I believed he was two men, or had two guns."

"It was made by a German gunsmith in Penn's colony. The ball is undersized, and I use a bit of deerskin, well greased with deer fat. This permits me to load very quickly, and I do not deform the ball by pounding it home. Again I remind you the ground is cold and damp."

"Sit on your heels, m'sieur. A man who can own such a gun must be stainless. I may call you M'sieur Sanstache. M'sieur will attend to what is excellent for both. First he will trade guns with Carcajou, the greatest of the *coureurs de bois* when Nicolas Perrot is out of hearing. M'sieur is too new to the woods to need such a beautiful gun."

"Shoot and be ——! I'm about to stand up," growled Brouwer in English.

"And M'sieur Sanstache is too great a man to travel unattended," calmly completed Carcajou.

Brouwer rose to his feet and defied him:

"You have both guns. If robbery is your

*Genesee River.

plan you have robbed me. If murder is included, then I prefer dying before freezing."

"Famous! M'sieur is brave and worthy to have the great Carcajou as his *engagé*. Now he can travel safely to La Baye des Puants, to Mackinac, to the Sault* or where he will."

Brouwer's heavy face lighted with a glimmer of hope:

"I don't understand. I only know you do not shoot."

"Load my gun if you please, m'sieur," said Carcajou, likewise rising.

Brouwer picked up the rifle, a new weapon to the *habitant*, and by the aid of the greased deerskin patch soon charged it. The moment he had completed the process Carcajou snatched it from him, lowered the hammer of his musket and presented it with a low bow, and said:

"It shall be as m'sieur wills. Who is Carcajou to refuse the trade? It is a good piece if m'sieur will hammer the naked lead home with verve."

He motioned to Brouwer to pick up his knife and ax and with no trace of his former mockery warned:

You live, m'sieur, on two conditions: That you employ me as your *engagé*, and that you travel to Mackinac and La Baye. I have a birch, hidden on the west bank of the outlet above Beaver Island. We take to water there if M'sieur agrees. I shall earn ten pounds of English money if he refuses."

"I will gladly employ the greatest rascal unhung under the circumstances," promptly replied Brouwer.

"Come, come! That is rather rough. Now I am your *engagé* I am an honest man."

Then sharply he commanded:

"Find your pack. If you flee the Bostonnais, I flee the French.

"With a chuckle he was whimsical again and observed:

"Droll! You are safe with my people. I am safe with yours."

While Brouwer was recovering his pack in the bushes Carcajou returned to the log and secured his blankets and supply of dried meat. Brouwer soon joined him and impatiently said—

"We must be going at once."

"Upon my faith! One would think the Evil One and not Albany pigs were after m'sieur."

Yet he lost no time in taking the path that followed along the bank of the bending river around the eastern half of Great Island. For two hours they swung along, Carcajou easily covering the ground as only a veteran bush-runner can; Brouwer walking more awkwardly yet always keeping up with his companion.

It was Carcajou who called a halt when they came to the mouth of the Whitewood River. He seated himself on a log and motioned for his companion to sit opposite him.

THE sky was lively with ducks and geese returning to their northern feeding grounds. With metallic crispness hidden waters searched for the river. The wind continued from the northeast and was very chilly, although the sun poured warmth into sheltered nooks.

Brouwer was for traveling and reminded the other—

"There is need of haste."

"*Mais oui.* But these oaks have been here many years. See how tall and strong they are. My poor head is bothered. M'sieur goes to the wilderness. He leaves his canoe at the mouth of the Niagara; the portage being too much for him to make alone. When the canoe is found the Senecas will know where to look."

"I sank the canoe."

"Come, now! There shines great wisdom. Yet as m'sieur's *engagé* I humbly ask how did m'sieur plan to proceed once he got above the mouth of the little rapids at the outlet of the lake?"

"The Huron man told me of a canoe hidden above the rapid. It was left there by an Iroquois war party just gone to make war on the Miamis. If not for that I should have rounded the end of Ontario and paddled back along the north shore to Taranto and made Lake Simcoe. At Georgian Bay I would have found some of his people who would help me."

"So? But what if they put m'sieur in the kettle?"

"That is a risk one must take who runs away," said Brouwer.

Then more confidently:

"But I fear no harm from the northern tribes. I know something of their language from the Huron man. And he gave me a token to show to any of his people. The Huron man said the Ottawas and the Tionontati (Tobacco Hurons) who live with

*Sault Ste. Marie.

them, prefer English trade and friendship to that of the French. Among them I would pass as English. In other tribes I would pass as French."

Carcajou's dark eyes smoldered as he growled:

"That Huron man seems to know more than a Jesuit. Holy blue! He has all the wisdom in the world. Perhaps he sang a different tune before the Iroquois caught him and adopted him instead of eating him."

"But the French out there should welcome me," insisted Brouwer, now fearing he had angered his captor. "I am in my present condition because of smuggling English goods down the Richelieu to your Montreal and Quebec merchants. Why, La Chesnaye himself ought to speak for me. He has been glad to buy of me."

Carcajou nodded as one who hears but pays scant attention. He held up his face, as clean of hair as an Indian's, for the north wind to buffet, and murmured:

"It is raining in Quebec. When the wind's in the north, m'sieur, it usually rains in Quebec. If I could be there on a market day! The women in their caps, *noblesse* and common. And their long cloaks of gray, or brown, or blue!

"Your women, m'sieur, are like our winters. Cold. When they sing they sing piously, or of sadness. Some one is dead. When our girls sing it's all *amour* and *cour*. Always that. You carry some small token to the Hurons?"

"A small belt the Huron man gave me. He says it will be my passport."

Carcajou laughed noiselessly and muttered:

"Well, well! That is fine. But if those Hurons knew certain things they would have my arms hanging over the side of a kettle. It was when I was much younger and serving as a sentinel before the intendant's place."

"It is chilly here. Let us walk," broke in Brouwer.

"That was at the Fort St. Louis, long before Talon's old brewery in the lower town was made into the Palace of Justice," continued Carcajou as if he had not been interrupted. "The Hurons had brought in their trade. Many *coureurs des bois*, as wild as their red friends, were running up and down the streets, singing and fighting. The Hurons drank much brandy. The life of the *coureurs des bois* seemed to be the life for a young man of fire.

"I was scarcely more than a boy. I was ever impulsive. I watched them and longed to do something to make them think well of me. I envied old Papa La Blanche, who's lived in the woods so long he can't remember when he lived in a house. As a sentinel I had much feeling of importance. So, M'sieur Impatience, when a brandy-mad Huron grabbed my musket away I snatched his *casse-tête** from his hand and felled him to the ground. I shall always remember how droll he looked as he lay there on his back, his arms spread out.

"I was very young, and my face was fair as a girl's. So none of them remembered me as the important young man doing sentinel duty on that wild night. The few Iroquois in the town were much pleased by the fighting. They hoped the Hurons would attack the houses.

"There was one Seneca there, Chaudière Noire, who saw me strike the Huron. After they had carried the dead man away to be covered with presents by his Excellency the Seneca took my hand and asked me to come and live in his village."

"You killed a Huron?" muttered Brouwer.

"I could have used the flat of the ax," admitted Carcajou. "But I ever was impulsive."

"Why do we wait here? You say you are pursued."

"Carcajou is usually pursued, m'sieur. Now I am well above the end of the portage path I take my ease. I have all North America to hide in. I have dared much to go to Quebec and confess my sins. The French soldiers from overseas are afraid of the woods. M'sieur runs away before knowing what Dongan would do to him. Can they punish beyond taking one's goods and making him pay a fine?"

"They can send me to England to be kept in prison. Or his Excellency can have me executed."

"Droll! I did not understand they could be so severe," said Carcajou with polite skepticism. He lifted a finger for silence, half rose and looked to the north and softly advised:

"Let us withdraw a bit, M'sieur-who-may-be-executed. Some one comes."

*Head-breaker. Musket-shaped clubs of the northern Sioux, Sauk and Fox and other Algonquian tribes, perhaps first called this by French. Term later applied to all clubs and metal axes.

"If you had walked along as I wanted you to—" muttered Brouwer as he seized the snaphaunce. "They come after me."

"Whoever comes walks foolishly. It is time some one showed up on my trail."

And, bending low, he glided among the oaks and treed himself. Brouwer did likewise, although as yet he had not heard or seen anything. But Carcajou's ears were nicely tuned to forest sounds. After they had waited a bit in the steaming woods Brouwer caught the sound of a voice. It sounded faint and far off.

The voice ceased, Brouwer was growing impatient when after a considerable pause the sounds were renewed and this time much nearer. Carcajou tilted his head, nodded approvingly and murmured:

"He sings of love, my friend. He is very sad. But he is French and must sing of love whether sad or merry. Come now; sharpen your ears. You hear it? He sings of Anjou. Of course, of a demoiselle. 'Peaches ripen in the sun. M'm'selle's cheeks are flushed like ripe peaches.' As it should be. What would you have? How droll of him to go along the edge of the Seneca country so loudly!"

Brouwer, frowning, held his musket ready, Carcajou was smiling in sympathy with the imprudent singer. He murmured:

"Once I sang of love into a pretty ear. M'sieur shall hear me some day when I am in the mood. She was a Quebec girl. You must know, m'sieur, the girls in Quebec have the first pick of the overseas French. Montreal girls do not like it. M'm'selle professed to return my affection. Then came a King's ship from Brest while I was making my first trip as *coureur de bois*.

"I had my license to trade. I was very proud. I was to make enough profit to build a little house of stone with walls two feet thick. I returned rejoicing. The little house of stone was never built. Behold! M'm'selle was madame. She had married a young officer, and they now beg their living from his gracious Majesty. Sometime after that I became Carcajou.

"It was madame's husband who recognized me in Quebec and raised a cry. A little fat pig of a man. I took him by his top hair and sounded the cry for the dead. Then I gave the war cry of the Potawatomis. He believed he had been scalped. He became unconscious from fright."

"Have done," warned Brouwer. "That man will be in sight in another minute."

"I am m'sieur's humble *engagé* when he talks in the voice of a chief. My tongue is torn out by the roots. But after hearing Bostonnais sing through their noses it is good to hear a *chansonnette* of Anjou—of warm suns, ripe peaches and love. *Mon Dieu!* But how I emptied my young heart to that false one! And she married a man who will never be prime if he lives a thousand years."

"——! Will you hush?"

Carcajou's lips went up, and his sharp nose came down. He darted a glance from the corner of his wicked black eyes; then shrugged his shoulders and murmured:

"I have been a sentinel for the intendant. I obey to the death."

The singer came in sight and caused Carcajou's expression to shift to one of amusement and admiration. It was a gay and gallant figure, although the overseas finery was somewhat stained by the grand traverse, somewhat torn by rocks and briers of the numerous portages and *décharges**. A plume on his hat was broken and bedraggled. But had the man's apparel been in fragments Carcajou could have reconstructed the original effect.

He was amused because the man was very young, scarcely more than a boy, and and gave the impression of singing to keep up his spirits, or courage. He halted and stared about uneasily, then glanced back to the north. For a minute he appeared to be undecided; then squared his slim shoulders and thrust out his chin and advanced. Again, when abreast of the two fugitives, he became irresolute and halted and swung his gaze back to the north.

"He is afraid of the loneliness," Carcajou whispered to his companion. "He makes himself walk alone. Others come behind him. He wishes he was back with them."

Brouwer frowned for his companion to be silent; but if the singer was in advance of a party he did not propose to await their coming just yet. Adjusting the ragged lace at his sleeves and neck and brushing some forest mold from his gay coat, he dropped his hand on the hilt of his rapier and resumed his advance up the river bank, walking with a swagger. In contradiction to his bold bearing was the uneasy turning

*Where they lighten a canoe to carry it over rocks. Portage, where canoe and load are carried around the rocks or rapids.

of the head from right to left where stretched the forest. When he disappeared beyond a grove of oaks Carcajou softly exclaimed:

"Such a brave appearance! Such an air! How did the girls of Quebec ever let such a fine-looking young rascal slip through their hands! And the girls of Montreal! But, my smuggler, it is his first visit to the bush. He does not like it. Had we cried, 'Boo!' he would have jumped out of his skin, then pulled his long sword and fought like a dozen devils. We will follow him."

"What about the men who come behind him?" growled Brouwer.

"Upon my faith! I was forgetting. But no. He can't be one of Desbergères' men. Yet there must be others coming, for where is canoe and packs? We will keep to the woods, my runaway."

They set out after the stranger, but kept some distance from the river path. Carcajou was surprized to find that Brouwer was following him as noiselessly as a veteran *coureur de bois*. Over his shoulder he hissed:

"Name of names, M'sieur Soft-Foot! I should not relish to have you trailing me in the dark."

After ten minutes of this stealthy pursuit Brouwer halted and warned—

"Wood is burning."

Carcajou was disgruntled that he had not been the first to detect the fire. He sniffed the air and answered:

"Of a certainty. I have been smelling it for some time. But the gallant who sings of ripe peaches has not had time to use his fire-flint."

"He doesn't know enough to find dry wood," added Brouwer. "Men are behind and ahead. We'll be lucky if we don't find ourselves bottled up."

"By the Ancient Hatters of Paris! It will need a big man to sit in the neck of the bottle when Carcajou wishes to get out."

Silently the two reconnoitered and soon heard the sound of voices and could perceive a blue film of smoke through the growth. Another rod, and they were beholding the singer and a man who was as repulsive in appearance as the singer was prepossessing.

It was the second man who had started the fire. He was squatting beside it. A greasy green* beaver robe hung from his shoulders to the ground. Above the robe were a shaggy beard and a disheveled mass of coarse black hair. He resembled some monstrous, unclean animal as he squatted there, his eyes glaring from ambush behind the matted locks.

In decided contrast was the young man. He stood with legs straddled apart, his hands on his hips, his chin thrust forward; and he was eying the unkempt figure with disgust and curiosity.

"*Diable!*" he exclaimed. "Would you mind standing up, Hairy One, so I can see if you walk on two legs or four?"

"When I stand up you'll pay toll fast enough."

"So you return to that. Again I say a Chartier asks permission of no man as to where he shall walk, except it be of his Serene Majesty."

The man by the fire leered maliciously and hoarsely replied—

"M'sieur will pay the portage toll or be plucked clean like a chicken."

The other tapped his rapier and confidently assured the other—

"A Chartier carries his purse hanging on his hip. Beast or human, you want no toll out of that."

"Ho, ho!" rumbled the other, slowly rising. "You use the voice of a chief. You speak like Adario, the Rat, chief of the Petun Hurons. I can trade your sword for many prime beaver, although a Huron will use it as a soldier handles a half-pike and always prefers his *casse-tête*. Your coat and hat will bring even a better trade.

"M'sieur had better change his mind and pay Turcot the toll of the portage. Or has he no silver? Not even a livre to open the path and sweep it clean of briers?"

And a malignant grin stressed the banter as grimy hand crept to the belt under the greasy robe.

"I can pay in écus when it need be," was the haughty reply. "But not a sol for a ruffian who is covered with hair."

"Then the —— snatch me if you don't pay with your throat!" snarled Turcot as he pulled his knife.

Instantly the rapier was out and all but pricked the hairy chest under the foul robe. Screaming, and moving with the agility of a wildcat, Turcot leaped back and whipped an ax from his belt and snapped his arm backward.

"Drop it, Turcot!" thundered Carcajou,

*Green beaver were skins worn for many months by the Indians until the long hair had fallen off, leaving the down. This, being oily, was easier for hatters to work up. These were most in demand by the French. "Greasy winter pelts"—*castor gras d'hiver.*

stepping into view with the rifle half-raised. "You know me, Turcot. Belt that ax. You, young m'sieur, who is so bold of tongue, put up that tickler."

RECOVERING from his surprize at the unexpected appearance of the two men from the oaks, Chartier slowly sheathed his weapon and complained:

"Three against one, and two armed with muskets, is too great odds. I see I must be robbed."

"He insulted me," panted Turcot.

"Come, come, shaggy one. Shut up!" commanded Carcajou.

Then to the young man:

"If we had arrived a bit later you would have had your white throat cut."

Turning to Turcot he continued:

"Up to your old tricks, eh? Oh, you bad dog! You'll yet be tortured and then strangled at Buttes-a-Neveu,* and then hung in an iron cage at the top of Cape Diamond."

"I spoke him fair," snarled Turcot. "But the young fool would have blood."

"I am Paul Chartier," proudly announced the young man. "Who is this man who threatens me with violence in his most gracious Majesty's country? You call him by name. Are you his friend?"

Carcajou grinned indulgently and answered:

"Upon my faith! But much can be forgiven one who sings so sweetly of ripe peaches and m'm'selle's love."

"Miserable eavesdroppers! You dare!" cried Chartier furiously, advancing to face Carcajou.

The outlaw made his legs shake as if from fear and pleaded—

"I beg the good Seigneur de Niagara not to whip us."

"I hold no seigniory rights here," angrily replied Chartier.

Brouwer, having no patience with the situation, harshly announced:

"This is no place for m'sieur to walk, shouting defiances. My companion has saved you from being killed."

Chartier's smooth face colored. To Carcajou he said:

"You have my thanks, monsieur. One's temper is not smooth after being threatened with knife and ax. May I ask your names?"

Before Carcajou could answer Brouwer replied:

"I am Dirk Brouwer, Dutch. I am running away from the province of New York. My *engagé* here who saved your throat is called Carcajou. I do not know this man who was about to stick an ax in your head."

"I spoke him fair," mumbled Turcot.

"He is called Turcot," the outlaw informed them. "He is working up from the common to the *noblesse*. He is wanted for killing a farm worker. Now he would kill a man of very high quality. In turn may we ask about you, who wanders alone without even a gun or blankets?"

Drawing himself more erect, Chartier haughtily replied:

"I have given my name; a distinguished one in Anjou. I am a younger son. It pleases me to come to New France to see if I like it."

"But your canoe, your outfit?" sharply asked Brouwer. "Or do you plan to swim to the Upper Lakes?"

"Monsieur sees fit to be facetious. My *engagé* and another man come behind me with canoe and blankets. After I see the country and find out what it is all about I may bring in goods and trade for beaver."

"Excellent, m'sieur," broke in Carajou. "The country needs honest traders. But how many more come behind you? A few of Marquis de Denonville's soldiers, eh?"

"I have said there are two. My *engagé* will not do you violence unless I order it. You offered to aid me. I did not need it. But you meant well. You are safe from the *engagé*," said Chartier.

"*Merci*, M'sieur de Niagara. We beg of you not to change your mind and tell him to harm us," humbly cried Carcajou, assuming a cringing attitude.

"Curse your fool-play!" violently declared Chartier. "But if I spoke the word he would kill all of you."

"Let's have done," impatiently interrupted Brouwer. "I shall soon be thinking we made a mistake in interfering. I see a canoe and two men. The lakes are wide and long, and there is no end to the forest. There is plenty of room for us and this young hotspur."

This time Chartier remained silent, and the gaze of the four was directed toward the

*A hillock on the Plains of Abraham; the place of execution.

long birch bobbing along the path, carried on the right shoulder of the foremost man and on the left shoulder of the second. It was not until the frail craft was gently lowered to the ground that Carcajou recognized the man in the lead to be Black Kettle. He cried out:

"It is good to see my brother again. He did not talk of traveling when his brother saw him at the River of Sables."

"The eyes feel strong when they look on my younger brother," gravely replied Black Kettle. "A cloud is between Onontio and his son, but there is always a place for him to warm himself inside the Western Door of the Long House."

"Onontio does not love the wolverene now, but some day the sun will melt the ice in his heart. Does my brother go to the lakes? Who is this other man who has lived in the Long House?"

And he rested his curious gaze on the second Indian, unmistakably a Seneca. This Indian had hastily gathered a blanket around his shoulders after lowering his end of the birch to the ground. Now he stood staring vacantly across the river to the western woods.

Black Kettle unconsciously lowered his voice and explained:

"He has given himself a new name. He no longer talks like a chief. He is the dead man Chaudière Noire was waiting to talk with at the River of Sables. He has left the Long House. There is meat in the kettle for Onontio's son. Onontio can not pass through the Western Door to find him. But dead men do not live in the Long House."

Without further speech he turned and made off down the river.

Brouwer stared after him distrustfully and muttered:

"I do not like it. It may be all right for you, Carcajou, but he may bring more Senecas and lay me by the heels. I shall feel safer with the Erie behind me."

"But see here!" cried Chartier. "That savage was to help my *engagé* carry my canoe to the lake. He breaks his bargain. He should be made to return."

"Love and ripe peaches! But what a masterful man! He commands the Iroquois to carry this and fetch that. Behold them bumping their heads on the ground," cried Carcajou.

"Too much nonsense," bruskly said Brouwer before Chartier could decide how to answer Carcajou. "M'sieur Chartier, you can take to water here. Your *engagé* will know the way by the west side of the little rapids. Or you can keep along with us and set us across to the other side, where we have a canoe."

"A Chartier does not carry loads on his shoulders like *Jacques bonhommes* (Simpleton Jacks)," muttered the young Frenchman. "Yet I would walk along with you if one of you can give my savage a hand in carrying the canoe and packs."

"Walk, wade or swim," impatiently declared Brouwer. Then in English, "And —— your superiority!"

"Hallo! What, what?" cried Carcajou, who had been absorbed in studying the blanketed figure of the silent Seneca. "Out of tune again, eh? Now we must be patient. It can be arranged if M'sieur de Niagara can reduce himself to carrying his own pack. The Sieur la Salle was not above doing that. I will carry Turcot's gun, and he shall help with the birch. He can throw his robe over the canoe."

"I am no portage slave," muttered Turcot.

The Indian came to life and strode forward, discarding his blanket; and in a hoarse voice and speaking good French he loudly announced:

"There was a time when the man who calls himself Dead Bear was not a slave. There was a time when one of Hawenneyu's children could stand naked before all men and hold up his head. Now he can not live with his people. When they see his back there is no place for him in the Long House unless he sits with the women. No bird will be caught and set free over his grave, for he walks about while a dead man. He has been whipped."

Then he slowly turned about and revealed a crisscross pattern of scars on his broad back and shoulders. Snatching up the blanket, he threw it over the canoe and took his place at one end.

"Bless us and save us! But here is mystery," muttered Carcajou, for once jolted out of his aplomb.

Then in a terrible voice he commanded:

"Turcot, pick up the front end of that birch. If you drop it and start the seams I'll make seams in your thick head all the pitch between Cataraqui and the Sault can't mend."

For a second Turcot met the blazing gaze

of the outlawed *coureur de bois* and beheld something he did not relish, then hastened to do as he had been bid. Brouwer picked up the musket and fell in with Carcajou and Chartier behind the carriers. Carcajou invited:

"Your man is a Senaca, m'sieur. Something very bad has happened to him."

"Poor savage!" said Chartier. "He was sent over with others of his race to serve as galley slaves* for our most Christian Majesty, being very strong and robust. I was about to sail from the harbor of Marseilles when some fishermen brought in the wreck of a galley. One of our men-of-war had run it down in the fog. The ship had rescued those of the guests found floating in the wreckage. I watched the men on the dock unfasten the irons of the dead slaves in the waist. All were pronounced dead.

"But, messieurs, I saw one man move. I gave him brandy. It was then early evening. The fog pulled back. The captain called all aboard that we might clear the harbor before the fog returned. In spite of his terrible hardships my savage got on his feet. He spoke to me in French. He had learned the language during the dreary months he was chained to a Frenchman. He would kill himself with the knife rather than go back to the oar. *Mon Dieu!* I can never tell what made me do it. But I smuggled him aboard. We were outside the harbor when the sailors discovered him. They threw him into the sea. Then I made the captain come to and take him aboard again. It cost me some fine clothes and most of my gold."

"*Ma foi!* With your brave sword you made the captain and crew do your will?" incredulously demanded Carcajou.

Chartier reddened as if shamed by the confession and stiffly explained—

"I jumped overboard and held him up till they put out a boat."

"God is good!" softly exclaimed Carcajou, his eyes shining. "They would leave a galley slave to drown, but they dared not leave M'sieur de Niagara. M'sieur, I shall learn to love you."

Chartier this time did not resent his new title, but diffidently replied:

"It was an awkward thing to do—to steal one of his most Christian Majesty's slaves. Yet it seemed something ought to be done. And that is all that's to be said about a very disagreeable subject, messeiurs. But no; there is one thing I do not understand. When they took the body of the *comite* from the wreck he still had his cruel whip clinched in his hand, but a round patch of hair had been cut from the top of his head. His head was raw and bloody. The fishermen marveled how he could get such a wound."

"Name of names!" gasped Carcajou, his eyes bulging. "Chief or galley slave, your Seneca is a man! After the galley was run down and he believed he must drown in his chains he managed to scalp the man who had whipped him! The brave rascal! That should help to cover some of his wounds. That should wipe away his sorrow better than four big belts."

"So that explains the mystery!" mused Chartier, frowning slightly. "The people on the dock wondered much how the *comite* could be shaved to the bone. Then my savage is guilty of a crime against one of his gracious Majesty's servants. That is bad. However, here we are and must make the best of it. Besides, he seems devoted to me. No; I can not send him back even if a King's ship were waiting at the mouth of this river.

"We met that other savage you called Chaudière Noire on the south shore. My man showed his back and they talked. Then the other came along with us. Yes; he shall keep on with me. I spoiled fine clothes in fishing him out of the sea. But I should feel less guilty if he had not mutilated the *comite*. Yes; he shall go on with me while I and my rapier learn something about this barbarous country it pleases our great monarch to hold."

"M'sieur will have as much use for his sword as New France has for potatoes,"* grunted Carcajou.

"Or a Huron for *chichicoue*,"† added Brouwer.

"But look here! What's this?" said Carcajou. "M'sieur the Runaway does not go among the Hurons for the first time."

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*For Iroquois sent to the galleys see "Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York," vol 9, pages 233, 315, 323, 375; restoration demanded, p. 389; sent back from galleys, p. 395. Also, "An Old Frontier of France," by Severance.

*Charlevoix says New France grew but few potatoes, the people finding them insipid.

†The Hurons did not use rattles, but sometimes made their prisoners carry them. "Journ. of a Voy. to Am." Charlevoix, vol. I, p. 340. I believe this is wrong. Charlevoix certainly was in saying the same about the Iroquois on same page.

"I was with Captain Rooseboom on his first trading venture two years ago," shortly replied Brouwer.

"So and so. Better and better. You carry not only a small belt to the Hurons, but you go to them as a friend."

"I go empty-handed to them now," was the dejected reminder. "I shall be lucky if white wampum hangs between us."

"Ah, that Rooseboom! What a noise in Montreal and Quebec when it was known he had traded with the savages on the Upper Lakes! A most distinguised company! The first white men, except French or their employees, to carry a trade there!"

Then Carcajou turned quickly on the silent Frenchman and shrewdly inquired:

"And has M'sieur de Niagara no other confession to make?"

Chartier frowned and was silent for a bit, then delighted Carcajou by replying:

"I see I have fallen in with rogues. I know now I spoiled my finest clothes in saving a rogue, the galley slave. I shall never like that; his mutilation of one of his Majesty's servants.

"I might as well tell the whole truth about my coming to this infamous country. Messieurs, there was a duel. I was fortunate enough to win. But unfortunately for me the loser was a favorite at court. The sweet cause of the quarrel sent me word to fly. I am here. Ask me no more questions."

Carcajou bellowed so loudly in merriment as nearly to cause Turcot to drop the end of the canoe. He was so overcome with delight that he must halt and rest the butt of his newly acquired rifle on the ground while he finished his laughing. Tears rolled down his bronzed cheeks.

Chartier glared at him wrathfully and fingered the hilt of his rapier. He muttered—

"Monsieur laughs when a Chartier speaks in earnestness."

"Sweet of my soul! You will kill me with joy, M'sieur de Niagara," gasped Carcajou. "We forest folks are simple of wit. It takes but little to bring the laugh, to put happiness into the heart. I pray m'sieur to remember he is of the *noblesse* and to be kind and patient. You shall sing to me of love and Anjou, while I lament the fair, false one who forgot me long enough to marry a pig.

"Life of life! But did ever such a rare company take to the bush before? Was the like ever seen on the Niagara portage? Other precious rascals were here and robbed poor Sieur la Salle, such as Hillaret, Noël le Blanc and Francois Sauvin and Jean Le Meilleur. But never such a company as ours. We could eat Moyse Hillaret and his rascals.

"Behold! Here am I, Carcajou, named after a forest beast, an outlawed *coureur de bois*, waiting to have the *fleur-de-lis* burned into my cheek and to wear irons like the Seneca ahead, and to end my days pulling a heavy paddle for the Great Monarch. Here is M'sieur Brouwer, refugee from the Province of New York, and carrying a price on his head perhaps for other mischief. Here is M'sieur de Niagara, running away from the Bastile, all along of killing a rival for the fair peach-cheeks of a demoiselle. Here is bloody Turcot, the escaped thief and murderer. And for good measure we have the Seneca, once a galley slave of Louis the Magnificent, now a walking dead man with the Western Door closed to him.

"Forward! Heads up, chins out! We'll twist the tail of the ——! Such a brave company of traders without a *rassade** or a single *canon* to trade. Forward, and with high hearts, brave m'sieurs, brave rascals! We will take to water and go on even if we have nothing to trade except our heads!"

CHAPTER II

AFTER THEY DANCED THE CALUMET

SHORTLY before Champlain came to the Mohawk country six Iroquois men went hunting with some Adirondacks, an Algonquian tribe. The people of the Long House were planters of corn and did not subsist by the chase as did the Algonquian hunters. It resulted that when the Iroquois bagged game where their Adirondack companions failed the latter were so jealous that they murdered their companions. This treachery transformed the Iroquois tribes into hunters of men; and from then on the geography of the red man changed.

At the time Carcajou and his strange company were rapidly paddling along the north shore of Lake Erie there was no red power outside the Long House until they should reach the top of the triangle formed by the valleys of the St. Lawrence and the

*French term for round beads of porcelain or glass, white, and various colors. Canon was the term for the long tubular bead.

Mississippi. And even there the Miamis, Mascoutens and other tribes were strong only so long as the Iroquois refrained from disturbing them.

For many years before Carcajou was born the Neutrals, Iroquoian stock, held the Niagara Peninsula from the Detroit River to the watershed of the Genesee; but in 1650 they were killed or dispersed by the Long House, and the country north of the Erie was to know them no more. Survivors of those Huron tribes, which were being exterminated by the same relentless confederation at the time of Cartier's visit to the St. Lawrence in 1535, fled to the Neutrals. Both these peoples were swept from the path of the victorious Five Nations; a path that extended even to the Black Hills in the Sioux country.

At about the same time the Eries, or Cat Nation, south of the lake met a similar fate. Likewise were the Shawnees driven back from the south shore, and yet farther south the Andastes were shattered.

Red history, entirely apart from white influence, was being made this April month of 1687. For the Tionontati, or Tobacco Nation, was blending with Huron refugees, and in less than a century they were to become the Wyandot Nation, the principal support of Pontiac, whose parents were little children as the illicit trader, smuggler, galley slave, murderer and fugitive Frenchman sent their birches into the west.

Carcajou and Brouwer were in the lead, with Turcot and Dead Bear paddling Chartier's canoe. The latter expected to find many signs of red life by the time they reached Grand River. He was politely informed that the country above was empty except for wandering bands of hunters; and that western savages bound for Montreal would travel by the way of Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe and down to Taranto, or by the Ottawa River route.

Favored by wind and weather, the two canoes were not detained as they followed the 1669 route of Galinée and De Casson. One of their camps at the mouth of a little creek was near a cross erected by Galinée. When they rounded Turkey Point they were within five miles of where the *Griffon*, with La Salle aboard, was nearly wrecked in a thick fog at the outset of her voyage.

Another camp was on the south side of Inner Bay, where Chartier became sentimental over the vineyards of France once he beheld the luxurious growth of vines on the east side of the sandy point. After making the short portage across the narrow base of the point they kept close to the shore-line and found it empty except for animal and bird life.

Among the red cedars on the east side of Bald Point they killed a bear with their guns, and Carcajou scolded because a careless bullet barely missed his head. From then on he watched Turcot sharply, half-suspicious the man had attempted to kill him. From this point the south shore was visible, also the Rattlesnake Islands (Sister Islands), and Chartier was informed that these were so thickly infested with the venomous serpents as to poison the air for a considerable distance. Turcot smiled secretly; he had dared the snakes by hiding there when his murder was a fresh item of interest.

Carcajou, who ever was expecting to behold canoes overhauling him, would not relax the terrific pace until they had entered the Narrows and had made a camp above the beautiful l'Isle de Bois Blanc. Then his brown face crinkled in smiles and he became as carefree and boisterous as a boy. To Brouwer he boasted:

"My friend, we were chased. Never doubt that. But they never saw the sun glint on our wet paddles. *Diable m'emporte!* I would like to see them catch Carcajou, the greatest of the *coureurs de bois*, always excepting the presence of Nicolas Perrot. Yes, my friend; Dead Bear's hatred of the galleys, Turcot's fear of Quebec justice and your fear of Corlaer, have brought us through with a smash."

"And what about your fear of Denonville's men?" grumbled Brouwer.

"Ho, ho! Come now, M'sieur Runaway, that is good! Carcajou afraid of soldiers, who are afraid of the woods! Yes, that is good. You forget I went to Quebec. But we can find a better camping place back from the water."

They selected a grassy opening almost surrounded by whitewoods, and Carcajou's high spirits found play in leaping to catch the limb of a tree and swing himself over it while the camp was being prepared. His exercises were interrupted by Turcot running with a kettle of water from the shore to announce hoarsely—

"Honorable messieurs, four men in two canoes are coming up the west side."

Carcajou frowned, his brown face hinting at worriment. Reason told him it was impossible for hostile canoes to arrive so quickly from the east.

"Bah!" he bragged. "Who cares? I can go to Du Lhut's fort above here and fear nothing. I have quit my wicked ways. I am an honest *engagé*. If m'sieur, my master, forgets that there will be a dead Dutchman. The hand of Quebec may reach this far, but the fingers can not close. We have a big talk for Perrot.

"We will go to the shore and make faces at them. But we will carry our guns, or some woods rascals will sneak in and steal them."

And he tucked his rifle under his arm and swaggered through the timber to where the canoes were drawn up on the shore. His first move was to draw these from sight; but before he could do so the two canoes across the narrow waterway turned and made directly toward him.

"Only Indian hunters," mumbled Turcot in relief.

Chartier discovered Dead Bear was missing. Brouwer informed him that the Seneca had taken bow and arrows to shoot some ducks and geese. Chartier lost his interest in the strange canoes and complained:

"Waterfowl are good to eat. I tire of deermeat. But the fellow should have asked permission. That is the trouble with these endless woods; they invited one to be too independent. It will be impossible to have peasantry out here."

"*Ma foi!* Such a hard taskmaster," muttered Carcajou as he shaded his eyes from the sinking sun and stared at the birches dancing over the golden path. "Two Indians in the first canoe," he continued as if talking to himself. "It is nothing. Hunters from one of the villages above."

"Two Indians in the second," added Brouwer. "If they be Hurons I will show them my belt."

"One Indian and a white man!" loudly corrected Carcajou, waving his arms wildly. "And cook me in a kettle if the white man isn't what's left of good old Papa La Blanche, the ancient villain! Ho, you old rat! Come ashore before I swim out and get you. What's the last tribe you married into, Old Trouble-Hunter? Ah, such a sad rascal! He's lived so long with red men he can't remember when he was white."

"But the Indians? Are they friendly?" asked Chartier, fingering his rapier.

"Old Papa's friends are mine," Carcajou assured him.

As the leading canoe came closer he exclaimed:

"It's Adario, the Rat! Chief of the Tionontati! He is a great warrior. No man in the West, red or white, can make a better talk. He would be a great help to France if he didn't fear Quebec is trying to win the friendship of the Iroquois. But listen."

Papa La Blanche was calling out. Carcajou cried back:

"Stop that Mascouten talk, Old Nonsense. So that's the last tribe to kick you out."

La Blanche's canoe held back. The canoe holding the Rat, hereditary and the greatest of the Tionontati chiefs, shot inshore and nosed into the bank. The chief jumped out and stared at the white men. He wore a laced hat and a French blanket. The latter was caught at the waist and hung to his heels, his deep chest being bare. In the canoe was a gay coat, a gift from the French, who were striving to overcome his suspicion.

After the first glance he ignored all the whites but Carcajou. As the latter continued smiling the heavy face of the chief gradually took on an amiable expression, and he greeted:

"The sun is warm now that Onontio's son comes back to us. What do these other men do here?"

Carcajou explained that Chartier was a young chief, the son of the Great Onontio (the King) and was making his first visit to his red brothers in the west. The Rat stared steadily at Chartier, and, observing that there was no lessening of the young man's haughty bearing, approved of him. Before Carcajou could speak for Brouwer the latter was saying:

"I ran away from Corlaer. I bring a talk about a war party of the Iroquois coming out here with a red ax."

"Imbecile!" gritted Carcajou, scarcely moving his lips.

Then to the chief:

"The Iroquois have turned back. If they came it would be to whip the Miamis. Onontio will not let them bring an ax to Detroit. He loves all his red children out here."

The Rat, expressionless of visage, spoke his old suspicions when he said:

"Little birds say Onontio would hang

white wampum between him and the Long House and forget his red children out here."

"The birds are owls and liars," fiercely declared Carcajou. "Even now Onontio makes ready to attack the Long House and tear it to pieces."

Brouwer in French demanded:

"Why do you spoil my talk? It is true. The Iroquois started. The chief will thank us for warning him."

"Tail of a poisonous snake!" growled Carcajou from the corner of his mouth. "Is your head foolish? Would you talk us into a kettle? The war party has been called back to be ready for Denonville. Your talk will keep all the Western tribes out of the fighting. They will stay here, fearing the Iroquois will come while they are gone and carry off their women and children."

"You should have told me," shortly retorted Brouwer.

The Rat shrewdly watched them and remarked:

"The white men must be careful, or the chain of friendship will slip from their hands."

Then, pointing to Turcot, who cringed and showed fear, he said:

"That man is bad flesh. If his medicine is wise it will keep him with Onontio's sons. He should not walk in the woods alone where an ax might fall on his head."

"He is a paddler," said Carcajou. "I shall make him change his heart, or kill him. *Cochon! Canaille!* He tends fires and brings water. He is nothing."

To Chartier he explained:

"His Majesty, the chief, does not like your Turcot. He has met him before."

"He is not my Turcot. He is my servant," hotly answered Chartier. "You call him pig and riffraff. So be it. But so long as he serves a Chartier of Anjou tell your red friend to keep his hands off."

Carcajou faithfully translated this defiant speech, and as he had expected it instantly won the Rat's approval. After a pause he said:

"He is young, but his tongue is brave. He talks like a chief. His man shall not be touched. Some time he will be given a name and they will sing the calumet for him."

He turned and nodded to La Blanche, who eagerly sent his canoe to the shore and leaped out. His paddler followed the Rat and the other Indian back to the campfire.

CARCAJOU greeted the old man effusively, abusing and admiring him in a steady stream of praise and invective.

La Blanche was tall and gaunt. A greasy beaver robe, caught at his waist, hung to his heels. His scrawny chest, like his thin, beardless face, was dark red like an Indian hunter's. The wisp of hair on the crown of his head was yellowish white. When Carcajou paused for breath the old man caught his hand and mumbled something in the tongue of the Mascoutens, an Algonquian people commonly called "Nation du Feu" by the French.

"Come, come, Old Nonsense; none of that!" bruskly commanded Carcajou, yet beaming admiringly on the ancient. "You've lived with French folks. At least once. Your mother knew all about it. What are you doing with the Tionontati? Where is the Fox woman you had last year? No secrets from the Wolverene, old Wife-Hunter."

Speaking slowly in French, La Blanche explained:

"I left the Fox woman to take a wife among the Mascoutens. May the —— catch her! I left the Mascoutens and came to the Rat's village to find a quiet place where I could open a twenty-five pot* keg of brandy. The Rat keeps his men in hand at the drinking. The Mascoutens might take my hair. But so many white men here! This place is crowded, my son."

Carcajou smacked his lips, gazed longingly toward what the blanket covered in the canoe, and exulted:

"The place is empty, Old Papa. Upon my faith I've had no brandy since running away from Quebec. You look to me like a shriveled-up old angel. We will drink the brandy and make merry."

His enthusiasm was unbounded. He seized the old man by the shoulders and pretended to struggle mightily but in vain to throw him to the ground. He leaped into the air and cracked his heels together and went through the pantomime of firing his rifle. By the time he had taken a few stiff-legged, stamping steps Papa's old face was split by a grin and his eyes were lighting with anticipation. Yet he was suspicious of those of his own color and asked—

"Who are these men, and the man who ran away?"

"It was Turcot, lovely Papa, who ran

*Two French pints, or 3.29 English pints to a "pot."

away. You know him. Turcot. A very sad rascal, Papa Goodness. Some day they will hang him in the iron cage at the top of Cape Diamond to frighten little boys into growing up to be good men, like your Carcajou. This man with the sober face is M'sieur Brouwer. He runs away from Corlaer. And this is M'sieur de Niagara, christened Paul Chartier. You will love him, you wonderful old villain, for he can sing of ripe peaches and a demoiselle's love. Ah, that hits your ear, eh?"

With a sweeping bow he presented La Blanche to his morose companions, saying:

"Behold! The only Papa La Blanche. The worst old rascal unburned. My old friend. He is older than the earth. He is older than sin. He has lived with so many tribes he doesn't know what to call himself. He has had more red wives than M'sieur de Niagara knows love songs."

Turning about, he berated La Blanche:

"You old ingrate! To run away from your loving Mascouten woman! What do you mean by such behavior? Why didn't you stay with your Potawatomi woman? They're the most friendly of all the Western tribes to us French. Shame on you for taking up with the treacherous Mascoutens! Why do you leave them?"

La Blanche talked in Mascouten. Carcajou laughed until tears rolled down his brown cheeks. When he controlled his mirth he interpreted—

"He says he thought she was an orphan and that immediately after she went to his lodge many of her relatives came to live with him."

"*Mon Dieu!* But what is he?" gasped Chartier.

This sent Carcajou into furious laughter. Chartier's thin face grew hard, and his gaze became baleful. He whispered—

"You laugh?"

Carcajou hastily assured him:

"At Old Papa. No offense to you, my son of old Anjou. But it is ever so. All strangers look at Ancient Papa and ask, 'What is he?' I have said, he is old as Time. He is Time. He is old and sad as Sin—he is a sadder sinner. Perhaps that is why we love him. He has lived with the Miami, the Potawatomi, the Fox, and many other tribes. Now he runs away from his Mascouten woman.

"Ah, the scamp! Even now he is wearing the braided girdle and leggings of the Mascoutens, and he can never cut their tattoo marks from his wicked old breast. But we waste precious time. The kettle is cooking. Bring the brandy ashore. We have fresh deermeat, and if Dead Bear brings in water birds we will have a big feast and scare the bears."

La Blanche first carefully removed his medicine bag from the prow of the canoe and then fished out the keg of brandy. While Carcajou was baring his head and doing homage to the keg La Blanche brought ashore a beautiful pipe of redstone, mounted on a long stick that could be stuck in the ground.

Carcajou went into ecstasies over the pipe. La Blanche proudly held it up for all to admire. The entire length of the long stem was decorated with the heads of small birds, yellow in color. In the middle was a large bunch of red feathers arranged in the shape of a fan.

Brouwer interrupted his companion's panegyric by saying—

"We have no time to waste in carousing."

"Carousing? On twenty-five little pots of brandy? Names of the saints! Who ever heard such talk! See here, M'sieur Runaway, here is land and water. Follow the shoreline long enough and you'll make the Huron if a bear doesn't catch you. But this night we sing the Song of the Calumet and wet this old pipe and do honor to some one. And we'll listen to songs of Anjou."

"Pardon, monsieur," stiffly broke in Chartier. "I am fastiduous of my company when I relax and sing. Singing is so intimate it is almost like a confession. One does not open his heart to song in the presence of galley slaves, assassins, naked wild men and outcasts."

"—— his insolence!" muttered Brouwer.

He spoke in guttural English and was not understood.

Carcajou told Chartier:

"M'sieur's tongue is sharper than his long sword. But if Adario, the Rat, also known as Kondiaronk and Sastaretsi, the great chief of the Tionontati Huron Nation, can endure shameless Old Papa's company and the presence of the rest of us, we will hope M'sieur the Exclusive will unbend a bit. His gracious Majesty would advise it, so that no French hand shall drop the chain of friendship held at the other end by the western tribes.

"Now none is more proud than Carcajou,

the Wolverene. *Pardi!* I am filled with pride. Yet I can unbend. I can walk with the *canaille* if it benefit my royal master. So I shall sing; sing of old Quebec and the false one, all to the glory of God and the greater uplifting of Louis the Magnificent in the New World.

"Give me the priceless keg, Old Nonsense. Never heed these two sulky ones who wear their pride on their sleeves where it is ruffled and frayed as easily as the soiled lace is torn by brier and thorn."

But Papa La Blanche was humble. Respect for the *noblesse* could never die from his mind. He pleaded:

"One little song of Anjou, m'sieur. Just as you would toss a sol to a poor beggar. I was born in Anjou. I came to New France when a child. I have lost my pretty manners. I am very old; seventy-seven, eighty-seven, a hundred and seven, who knows?"

"A sol to a poor beggar, and a son of Anjou," muttered Chartier, beginning to feel uncomfortable, beginning to shed his austerity. "You have traveled far and fallen into much evil since you were a child in Anjou, old man."

"I set out to better my fortunes, m'sieur, much as you have. If I have lost my way then the journey was long and rough. But a song of Anjou would kindle dead fires. Open doors I closed long ago. Take me back into a lost world. And, m'sieur, the brandy is good even if not so strong as Corlaer's rum."

"A Chartier never begrudges a sol to a beggar," muttered the young man. "Perhaps you shall have your song."

"Come, come!" gleefully urged Carcajou. "Now we are all like the blessed angels in heaven, and are ready to sing."

And with a flourish of his arms he led the way to the fire and the boiling kettle.

The Rat, reclining on the blanket, was watching Turcot stirring the meat. Turcot was uneasy beneath the steady gaze and evinced relief on beholding his companions. Dead Bear returned with a dozen ducks and geese and threw them down for Turcot to dress and add to the kettle.

Now the Rat had eyes only for the Seneca. The latter did not appear to sense the Tionontati chief's presence. At last the Rat demanded:

"Is this a man or a ghost? What is his tribe? He is not a Sioux, and yet he has many cuts on his back like a man who has dragged many buffalo heads, or has been hung up in the Sun Dance."

"He has been a prisoner of the Great Onontio and made to paddle a very big canoe while a man beat him with a whip," harshly explained Brouwer.

"Fool!" softly gritted Carcajou over Brouwer's shoulder. "Would you turn the Tionontati against the French? And what good Huron you speak!"

"You talk out of tune. The Seneca himself will tell it," roughly replied Brouwer without turning his head.

The Rat stared at the two, wishing he could understand their rapid exchange of words. The Seneca again engaged the chief's attention, speaking aloud but as if talking to himself; and now he spoke in the language of the Rat.

"He is of the Bear clan," he began. "They call him the Dead Bear. There is no place for him inside the Western Door. He has been whipped."

And he turned his back on the Rat and exposed the cruel cicatrices left by the boatswain's lash. For thirty seconds he stood motionless, then glided to one side and sat down beneath a tree.

"The Great Onontio can be ugly with his red children," mused the Rat.

"This man was not one of the Great Onotio's children," spoke up Carcajou. "And the Great Corlaer has stolen Abnaki men and has sold them as slaves."

"Let them fight and make slaves of each other," said the Rat. "Let them leave the Western tribes alone. It is good if Iroquois men are made slaves. But the Great Onontio may want more and more slaves until he must send out here to get them. His canoe must be very big and need many paddlers."

"The Iroquois have killed Onontio's sons and his red children," said Carcajou.

To change the chief's line of thought he suddenly became a boy in spirits. He whooped and raced up and down the opening until the two Tionontati men grew impatient to follow his example. Their small black eyes glittered with excitement as the *coureur de bois* grappled with imaginary enemies, got the best of them and then swung nimbly into the trees. Old Papa also watched with growing interest. Suddenly he sounded the Tionontati war whoop and leaped up and seized Carcajou

by the leg and pulled him from a tree and easily pulled himself up on a stout branch. Carcajou gave pursuit, but taking care never quite to catch his agile quarry, and the old man's quickness and strength were marvelous to behold.

But these antics could not hold the chief's attention. His gaze wandered to Chartier, who was reclining on his blankets and scowling at the bubbling kettle. At last the Rat inquired—

"Did the Great Onontio's white son run away so he would not be whipped?"

Chartier stared at him haughtily. Brouwer interpreted the query. The young Frenchman coldly replied:

"A Chartier often is killed, but never whipped. He ran away for killing the favorite of his gracious Majesty."

Carcajou, ever watchful that the conversation did not get out of control, dropped from a tree and interpreted this before Brouwer could do so. The Rat stared toward the Narrows as if oblivious to all but the paling western skyline. Without turning his head he finally said:

"If the Calumet is sung let it be sung for this young son of the Great Onontio. He has killed a warrior. His heart is strong."

Carcajou was greatly pleased that the chief should approve of the young Frenchman. The suggestion that the pipe be sung to Chartier would give tone and purpose to the carousal and, likewise it appealed to the outlaw's love of the bizarre.

The pipe had been sung and danced for Nicolas Perrot. The honor had not been extended to Carcajou. Instead of feeling any jealousy the reckless woods-runner with difficulty choked back his laughter as he told himself:

"What a queer dish of *potage!* A baby singing love songs hailed as a chief! It will take much brandy." Aloud he said, "The meat must be done. We will begin on that while the birds are cooking. After we've eaten we will sing and dance."

THE meat was not cooked enough to satisfy Chartier; but the others began fishing it out with knives and fingers and bolting it with the voracity of wolves. The squabbling rivalry for fat pieces caused the young Frenchman to turn his back in disgust, and even then the gobbling noises made his ears wince. But after a bit he discovered there was an appetite within him, built up by the traverse of Lake Erie, that ignored the absence of niceties and insisted on being appeased.

He was ashamed to find his repugnance rapidly weakening as the aroma of the kettle tickled his nostrils. Then came the fear that all the meat would be eaten. He stepped to the kettle, scowling fiercely, and gingerly helped himself. After that no man was before him in emptying the kettle of meat.

One of the Tionontati men rose and without a word disappeared in the direction of the landing place. Pipes were lighted, and for an hour there was but little talk.

Dead Bear heaped on more wood.

The Rat stared at the ground before him and appeared not to notice the Seneca, yet all the time remembering that the two of them belonged to the same clan, that of the Bear. When he lifted his gaze it was Chartier who seemed to hold his interest.

Carcajou talked aside with Brouwer. Old Papa La Blanche, aroused himself from a stuporous silence to ask about Quebec.

"Do they catch as many eels from the river as ever?" he hungrily inquired. "I would give the fall hunt for a mess of eels!"

"Roasted porcupine is better. It is good as sucking pig," mumbled Carcajou.

"On 'meager' days what can one eat in a country of meat?" worried Chartier.

"Roasted beaver!" cried Carcajou. "You have yet to enjoy that fine dish, M'sieur de Niagara."

"Monsieur knows beaver is meat," said Chartier, suspecting the Wolverene was making game of him.

"So the good God thought, m'sieur, when he made it," said Carcajou. "But the Faculty of Medicine of Paris has declared it to be a fish.* And the Faculty of Theology has decided it can be eaten on meager days, being in the same class as mackerel.†"

"And do the white porpoises play and leap in the river below Quebec?" went on the old man. "I can see in the fire Cap Chapeau Rouge as I first saw it when as a child I came to the St. Lawrence."

"I see braver pictures in the fire," grunted Carcajou. "I see savages from the west raging like wolves in the streets of Montreal when they had brought in their fall trade and were filled with brandy."

"We left the Islands of St. Peter on the

*A fact. †Charlevoix.

starboard side. Great and Little Miquelon looked to be two islands till one got near enough to see the sand dunes that connect them. I remember how frightened I was at night by the howling of the *huarts* (loons). So many years since then!"

"*Mon Dieu!* I believe the old villain was there before Cartier and Champlain!" softly exclaimed Carcajou.

"But never again shall my old eyes see the steep rock of Ile Percée, that looks like an old wall. There's the arch in the middle through which a Biscayan shallop might sail."

"His mind goes back a thousand years. It would take a rare keeper of the wampum to remember what all the belts mean," muttered Carcajou.

"For five days we lay up under l'Ile Verte, waiting for the land winds to carry us into the high tides," babbled the old man. "I knew a man whose father was at Saguenay before Cartier came to the river."

"You'll next be saying you saw the earth built," rumbled Carcajou.

"And there was the old post at Tadousac, where furs were traded before Quebec was named."

"Tadousac? Bah! He'll be praising a dung-heap over pearls next."

"And the Basques hunting whales and the planters on Orléans practising witchcraft."

He was not conscious of Carcajou's comments, but talked on and on in dull monotone, opening door after door that he might look back for sixty or seventy years. And after he finished his rambling monolog he remained staring into the fire, where undoubtedly he found more doors swinging open and perhaps permitting him glimpses of his childhood in Anjou.

The Rat was made uneasy by the mumbled soliloquy. He complained—

"The old man is talking with ghosts."

"See here, Old Papa Nonsense!" sharply commanded Carcajou. "You talk too much under your breath about dead things. The eels are good, and the girls are as wonderful as ever, but no girls like those of Quebec. But let us take our eyes from the east and look at the good brandy. There is a song to be sung and a pipe to be smoked and danced."

Then he abruptly asked the Rat—

"How long before Adario's warriors will come?"

The Rat lifted his head as if listening. The warriors had arrived. Their guttural voices could be heard as they hastened from the landing place. There were twelve of them, including the messenger sent to bring them. Without a word of greeting to the white men or their chief they seated themselves in a short half circle behind their leader and eyed the keg hungrily.

The Rat stood up and gravely announced:

"When the red children of Onontio drink the strong water they put aside their knives and axes. We are all brothers here. Let the knives and axes be left by the tree where the woods begin behind me."

Carcajou was the first to strip his belt of weapons. Soon there was a small mound of weapons at the edge of the clearing. Only Chartier refused to disarm. He coldly declared—

"A man of my house does not put aside his rapier except when at home."

"But, M'sieur de Niagara!" expostulated Carcajou. "One should not drink at the Narrows with a sword in his belt."

The Rat readily understood the pantomime accompanying this exchange and said:

"Let the young man who talks like a chief keep his long knife. He comes a stranger to us, as Perrot did. If a pipe is to be sung, let it be sung to him."

"What does he say?" suspiciously demanded Chartier.

"He says we shall give you the honors of a chief, M'sieur Few Years," Carcajou told him. "Upon my faith! It was never done for the Wolverene, nor for Old Papa. But men do not receive crowns with a sword at their side."

Chartier reddened, bit his lip as if stifling a strong impulse, slowly unhooked his belt and hung it on a branch over the head of Dead Bear.

"Good! Now we are most polite!" cried Carcajou. "Come, come, Old Papa Nonsense. Dig yourself out of the last five hundred years. Bring forth the keg and have the pipe ready. Only brandy will wash the grease from our throats, and we must be warm before we can dance the calumet."

All the savages except the chief were betraying impatience to be at the keg. Papa La Blanche arranged it and opened it. Then he produced a pewter cup and remarked:

"Now we will warm up. Every one in turn, and no tallow in the bottom to make it a 'trade drink'."

Chartier refused to drink the first time the cup was passed. Brouwer did not appear to be relishing the evening. When the cup reached him he hesitated, before swallowing the fiery dram.

The Indians, with the exception of their chief, were quick to lose their stolidity. The drink reacted upon them almost immediately and they were soon muttering war songs and sounding their war cries. After the second ration they commenced prancing and in pantomime attacking and vanquishing an enemy.

Old Papa La Blanche forgot his troublesome wives and closed all doors on the past and showed his few snaggy teeth in a fixed grin. Then Chartier, sniffing of the brandy, succumbed to the aroma but would not drink from the common cup. From his pack he procured a small silver cup and drank. From then he needed no urging.

Dead Bear alone refused to partake, although he helped to serve. He made no response when Carcajou merrily urged him. When Chartier, however, insisted he said in French:

"The *comite* always smelled of brandy. It makes me think of his whip. It hurts my back."

Carcajou lustily shouted a song, a song of the forest, a quaint jumble of French and Indian terms. La Blanche's croaking voice ran through a series of war-whoops. Brouwer's heavy face took on a sardonic smile and even laughed at the old man's antics. And there was a gleam in the eyes of the Rat that was not born of the firelight; but he held himself in restraint.

Chartier quickly cast aside his habitual reserve and tentatively hummed a *chansonnette*. Carcajou bellowed for the others to be silent; and the young Frenchman found himself singing of ripe peaches and a maiden's cheeks. Carcajou was weeping when the song was finished.

"What does the young man sing?" asked the Rat.

"Of the men he has killed," replied Carcajou.

In French he cried:

"May I be flayed alive by the Sioux if young m'sier is not worthy of all the pipes in the West. He has brought tears to the eyes of a wolverene. My love was false and married a pig. The moon is a *louis d'argent*. My heart is filled with wine, my head with love. Bring out the pipe, old Papa."

La Blanche with dancing steps produced the pipe. The Rat said—

"It's a Sioux calumet."

With a sly grin La Blanche explained to Carcajou—

"I wintered with them two years ago."

"And left a Sioux woman, I vow!" roared Carcajou.

"She was a vixen. She could not sweep a lodge clean."

He offered to present the pipe to the Rat, who motioned him back, saying:

"Adario has received the pipe. Give it to the young chief. Perrot was like him when he first came here."

Without lighting the pipe La Blanche ceremoniously approached Chartier from the west so as to present the calumet from the side next to the sun. Then, drawing it back, he stuck the long stick in the ground and slowly caused the pipe to revolve while he addressed the gods of the air, the earth, and the water.

By the time he had finished his invocation Carcajou had a new blanket spread. La Blanche squatted on this and with his fire-flint lighted the tobacco.

"It is a good pipe. It is a Sioux pipe. Let the first song be Sioux," said the Rat.

Papa La Blanche took a few puffs and began—

"Ni na ha ni, ni na ha ni."

Carcajou accepted the pipe and joined in—

"Ni na ha ni, na ni on yo."

The Rat smoked and sang in unison with the first two. Turcot came next and caught the swing. Repetition had taught Chartier by the time it came his turn to smoke, and he trilled—

"Ni na ha ni, ni na ha ni."

Brouwer puffed deeply and boomed—

"Go ho ni na ha ni."

"You know the Calumet Song of the Sioux!" exploded Carcajou.

The Rat frowned, and Papa La Blanche growled—

"Silence, Little One!"

Although Dead Bear would not drink he smoked, and the song was finished. Then Papa La Blanche set Chartier to coughing violently by unexpectedly blowing a cloud of smoke in his face. With a snarl of rage

the young Frenchman snatched up a fagot, but before he could strike the Seneca had seized his arm with an iron grip and was explaining in French:

"That is the way honor is done a man by the calumet. If you are smoked like meat you must not speak."

And Chartier held his breath and half closed his watery eyes while each man in turn puffed the smoke in his face.

"Well done!" shouted Carcajou after the ceremony was finished and the pipe was placed aside. "On my faith! It was never done better."

"It was well done," slowly agreed Dead Bear in French. "You have given the Great Onontio's son the honors of a chief. You have given him an equal part of all the power you white men hold. You have sung the calumet for him. After this his voice must be heard as loud as any voice in all your councils."

Brouwer began—

"What nonsense is this?"

Carcajou grinned amiably, rubbed his brown cheek and admitted:

"*Eh bien!* But it is true. Old Papa will tell you we have raised this man among us to the place of chief. He can open a talk in our councils."

"Our white brothers' talk does not find the Tionontati ears," the Rat suspiciously reminded them.

Carcajou explained. The Rat stared haughtily at Brouwer and said:

"The calumet has made him a chief among white men. When you blew smoke into his face you blew power into his heart. Let that bag of talk be closed tight. My young men will drink once more and dance."

"Ho, ho, for the dance! We will dance and sing," heartily indorsed Carcajou.

"I, too, will sing," announced Chartier, emptying his silver cup and waving it.

"Look here, Young France. It was Adario who suggested the honors of the calumet be given you. Don't forget your manners. Thank him."

"*Canaille!* You are insolent enough to tell a Chartier what he should do?"

Then with much grace the young man advanced, silver cup in hand, stood before the Rat, and said:

"A slight token, Monsieur Chief, of a Chartier's appreciation of monsieur's politeness."

He offered the cup, and the Rat snatched it and without a word tucked it inside his blanket.

"Ah, that young blood-drinker!" admiringly exclaimed Carcajou, his brown face widening in a grin. Chartier ignored him.

The savages began their dancing, each after his own notion, and each in turn sang his song, none repeating what another had sung, as that would be the grossest of insults. One warrior imitated the "good time" dance of the northern Chippewas and carried a stick for pipestem and maintained a crouching or squatting posture in an effort to assume the form of a pipe, his body being the bowl.

Carcajou tore off his shirt and danced vigorously and improvised a song about the Wolverene and in pantomime had the beast approach a trap and click his teeth and leap away to illustrate how the trap-robber was not to be caught when the trap was sprung. The Rat admired this greatly and offered to trade twenty beaver for exclusive use of it as a medicine dance. Carcajou proudly refused.

Neither Brouwer, Turcot nor Dead Bear danced. Turcot was willing; but the Rat shook his head when he, naked to the waist, would have entered the circle around the fire. Chartier minced gracefully through various poses and accompanied his steps with a love-song, pausing to grimace and smirk until even the Tionontati understood he was pursuing a maid.

When he had finished the Rat commanded:

"Let no more strong water be given my young men. They say this man has a fire-dance."

And he looked at Papa La Blanche.

"There is a dance of fire," admitted La Blanche, but hanging back.

"Come along, Old Nonsense. None of that! You've picked up a new dance since I saw you last. We're waiting. Let's have it," bellowed Carcajou.

Papa La Blanche threw his beaver robe over his shoulders, squatted by the fire for a few moments and then darted into the darkness among the trees.

"*Parbleu!* What has happened? He runs away!" exclaimed Chartier.

"Hush! Wait," murmured Carcajou.

All watched where the old man had disappeared. Soon they saw a red eye moving from side to side. Chartier crossed himself. The red eye floated about and slowly

approached until the fringe of the firelight permitted the spectators to behold a grotesquely dancing figure, naked except for the breech-cloth. Chartier in amazement softly cried:

"*Mon Dieu!* He breathes fire! He is a goblin!"

"That old Papa!" muttered Carcajou. "He is cunning. He is clever! What a pleasing old wretch!"

The old man danced, holding the live coal in his mouth. He receded into the black woods until only the fire could be seen, a red eye that vanished behind a tree only to peer forth again most eerily. The white men shouted their approval. The Indians pressed their hands to their mouths. When La Blanche returned he was enveloped in his robe. Carcajou caught him by the shoulders, drew him close to the fire and examined his mouth. He could discover no signs of a burn. He demanded:

"Come now! No secrets, Old Nonsense. Spit it out! What did you use? The inner bark of the cedar. I've seen a Missisauga man dance. They say he used the leaves of the anemone."

"It is my medicine. I use nothing. I can eat fire," hiccoughed Papa La Blanche, now strongly showing the effects of the brandy. "I eat fire by handfuls. *Ni na ha ni ka oua ban.*"

"The calumet has been sung. You should not sing it now," broke in Dead Bear.

Papa glared at the Indian, then drew his long knife, croaked his war-cry, fell on his blankets and remained insensible.

"The lost Seneca is wise. He has listened to owls," said the Rat. "We will sleep our heads clear. Let the Seneca man hide the strong water."

"Bah!" growled Carcajou. "I was just beginning to feel merry. But that Perrot is waiting for the Wolverene to help him. What would New France do without me! *Mais oui!* And what would old Louis in old France do without me? I can carry all Canada on my shoulders. With another pot of brandy I could carry all France on my back. Sleep sound, old Louis; your Carcajou is watching out for you. He will whistle like an elk and fool that Dongan yet."

As he pawed open his blankets and continued telling himself what he would do for France he was suddenly reminded to tell Brouwer:

"I am remembering, M'sieur Smuggler, you sang a part of the Calumet Song of the Sioux that had not been sung. Where did you learn it?"

Brouwer sleepily replied:

"I have told you I was with Captain Rooseboom on his first trading venture. The Hurons had it from some Sioux men. I heard them sing it.

"*Ma foi!* Those Hurons. They know more than the Black Robes. M'sieur Smuggler knows more than the Seminary at Quebec. And the drunken Hurons and Ottawas rage like mad wolves through the streets of Montreal after carrying down their fall hunt. We will rest."

Chartier was for more song and drink; but the Seneca had hidden the keg, and after a brief insistence the young Frenchman rolled in his blankets, and the camp slept.

SOME time after midnight Carcajou was aroused by a stealthy hand fumbling for his throat. Barely awake, he seized a wrist and came to his feet. The fire was covered, and the opening was black and illuminated none by the sprinkle of stars.

As he closed his grip his free hand by chance locked around the other wrist of his assailant, and by the rigid cords he knew the hand was clinched about a weapon. He gave a tremendous twist and yelled to arouse the camp. The man wrenched himself free.

Still calling on his companions to make a light, he groped about to locate his enemy. A figure toppled into his arms, and as he gripped him the man went limp. Brouwer was bawling questions. The ashes were raked aside, and a smoldering fagot was swung around until it burst into flame and the Dead Bear ran forward. Carcajou stared in amazement at the stupid face and rolling eyes of Papa La Blanche. Limply clutched in the old man's hand was a long knife—his own.

TO BE CONTINUED

Keegan's Law and Order

by E. S. Pladwell

Author of "Power," "The Gila Kid," etc.

DEPUTY SHERIFF JOE KEEGAN was honest, loyal, decent, ponderous, red-faced, sandy-haired, blue-eyed and slow in the head. Henry Wolf of the San Sangre tribe of Apaches was decidedly larger and even slower intellectually. They glared at each other across the rusty barbed-wire fence in front of the Indian's rickety one-room shanty at the edge of a great barren plain.

"I came to get that stolen automobile!" roared the deputy, pointing a forefinger toward the barred doors of a paintless shed at the rear of the house.

"No!" demurred the Indian.

"Here! I'm a deputy sheriff of this county. See star? Yes. All right. I want that car! It was stolen by 'Red' Jenkins. He left it here with you. He's in jail. You *sabe* jail? You bet you do! All right. That car must go back to Gila City. It will be used as evidence in the case of the People *versus* Jenkins. See?"

The low-browed redskin studied it out under his black mass of greasy hair. He brought his verdict slowly but stubbornly—

"You tell People go chase himself!"

"So-ho! Are you tryin' to get into trouble with the law? You'd better watch out, me buck! I'm likely to land you behind the bars!"

"You go home! Lemme alone!"

Keegan, who had endured twenty minutes of this, felt helpless. He had no search warrant. He had come here in a moment of self-appointed enterprise, during the absence of his boss in the other end of the county. He had no evidence except a furtive tip from a jail prisoner, which he had followed up too quickly. Now he was forced to fall back on sheer bluff.

"Let you alone, eh? You'll play another tune me mud-faced lummox! You hand over that auto or I'll throw ye so far into the dungeon ye'll never get out alive!"

The Indian's voice became passionate. He shook a fist in dismissal.

"Go home! You lemme alone! Go home!"

Keegan's wrathy knuckles clenched under the Indian's frowning face.

"Home, eh? You pie-faced Piute, you're likely never to see your home again! You'll be chained to a jail bench, you big dumbbell, and you'll spend the rest of your life in irons! Irons, see? Huh! We know how to handle your kind! Are you goin' to hand over that auto?"

"You go chase yourself!"

"Chase meself! You bum! I'll show you! You've got me where I can't get in, but I'll tell ye somethin, me fine big boob: I'm goin' to get a search warrant, a writ of replevin and a warrant for your arrest! Taste that! Try our jail! I'll be back, all right all right; I'll be back, never fear!"

"You lemme alone!" snarled the alarmed Indian, edging toward his front door.

"Let you alone, eh? We'll see! Wait till the steel handcuffs are on ye! We'll see!"

The Indian reached his door. He slammed it. The baffled deputy shrieked a final malediction and leaped into his auto and screeched over the hills to Gila City. In three hours he was with the district attorney.

"Get that stolen car!" demanded the district attorney. "Don't stand for any nonsense! You can have all the papers you want! Get that Indian!"

Keegan, armed with a sheaf of documents, triumphantly went downstairs to the sheriff's office. Old Tom Lloyd, the other deputy, was reading the Gila City *Enterprise* at his desk.

"It's a shame about this newspaper," complained Mr. Lloyd, without further greeting. "Here's election only one week away while the *Enterprise* won't come out for the boss, and him such a fine sheriff. And most everybody votes the way the *Enterprise* tells 'em. It's a shame."

"It is," agreed the loyal Keegan. "Where's the boss?"

"Doin' politics in the south end of the county."

"Good luck to him," hoped Mr. Keegan, piously. "I'm goin' north for a few hours."

Mr. Lloyd nodded and buried his face behind the shameful newspaper. Mr. Keegan tucked his legal documents into his pocket and sallied forth in his machine on the long desert road which wound over mountains and sagebrush flats toward the northern valley where the stubborn Indian lived.

The sunset splashed the land with vivid golds and yellows before the deputy's car arrived in front of the sorry garden which surrounded the Indian's shack; but the officer of the Law slammed out of his car and strode valiantly forward, ready to do or die.

He had been thinking. As the miles had bumped past under his wheels, his slow but loyal brain had pondered upon the predicament of his boss, William Burke, six times sheriff of Gila County, now forced to fight for his political life because a gang of personal enemies wanted revenge.

Keegan knew their whole campaign was based on criticism. Every official act of Sheriff Bill was under a shrewd inquisition. Every mistake was being pounced upon. Even the all-powerful Gila City *Enterprise* was withholding judgment. Under such circumstances, could Deputy Sheriff Keegan fail to return triumphantly with that stolen auto?

No!

Resolutely he tramped upon the rickety front steps of the house. Nobody was home. Disappointed, he went to the locked barn and peeped through the cracks between the boards. Nothing was there except darkness and a sick hen.

Mr. Keegan, vaguely worried, blinked and scratched his head. He noticed that even the usual pack of mongrel dogs was absent. The Indian, then, was gone; but where?

The deputy's blue eyes, flickering around, concentrated at last upon the dirt runway in front of the edifice. The marks of a well-known non-skid tire were printed beautifully upon the ground, leading straight toward the great outdoors.

Mr. Keegan consulted a notebook. The missing car was equipped with this sort of tire.

"So-ho!" chuckled Mr. Keegan triumphantly. "A clue! And now, me fine mud-faced Injun, we'll follow you up!"

LONG purple shadows stood behind the barn. The sunlight was fading fast, but Mr. Keegan ascertaining that the tell-tale tracks turned northward, piled into his machine, switched on the lights and started in grim pursuit.

Moonlight came. Rocks and yucca-palms assumed fantastic shapes. Dry lakes glimmered whitely as they went past; but the lamps of Mr. Keegan's auto, traveling slowly but relentlessly, blazed through sand flat and cañon as the trail of the errant non-skid tire led him inexorably northward.

"They'll not criticise the boss because of me!" he assured himself grimly.

The night hummed past. The eastern sky grayed and then turned to orange. Mr. Keegan caught the pungent morning smell of greasewood. Bleary from sleep, stiff from steering on atrocious roads, he noticed himself climbing up a winding trail past decomposed cliffs tinged with faint brown, blue, green and pink, where the echo of his exhaust purred back at him from several different directions.

Suddenly he halted.

"I'm comin' to Pine Tree Mesa," he informed himself, cautiously. "Pine Tree Mesa is the family home of the tribe.

There'll be Injuns there, no doubt. H'm."

He looked at the uphill road ahead. The trail of the fugitive non-skid tire was imprinted on the ground as if the plain path of duty had been laid out there for Mr. Keegan's special benefit; but the intellect under his broad-brimmed hat, though drowsy, was beginning to register a growing amount of unrest. Something warned him that his situation was getting thick.

He was about to burst upon an Indian camp where his quarry would be entrenched among friends and relatives. Some of the relatives were, to say the least, tough. Mr. Keegan was tired. He was far from home. He was but one lone man against many. He was, in brief, about to invite a large-sized catastrophe.

"No," demurred Mr. Keegan. "I'd better think it over."

He thought it over. At length he started the car, backed, turned and retraced his course downhill.

"I'll play safe!" he decided. "It's better."

He drove for two hours. He came to a country of rolling sagebrush hills where the roofs and cottonwood trees of the Paul Barry ranch stood out in the distance, under the lee of a bare mountain. He took the bumpy side-road and in time he was lunching with the husky, elderly, square-jawed owner of the vast cattle outfit. The luncheon was graced by the presence of ten hard-looking riders.

"Sure I'll help you," agreed Mr. Barry, heartily. "Jim, get the old touring car out of the barn. Tom, put some gas in the flivver. Joe, bring out them extry rifles. Pete, unpack them ca'tridges in the storehouse. Mike, tell the cook to give us some grub. I've been waitin' three years to pay them Injuns a visit and now the hand of providence is lettin' me do it legal. Hot dog! Mister Deputy, you're an angel. Shake!"

Mr. Keegan shook.

"If you had any evidence against the Injuns," he remarked cautiously, "you should have notified the authorities!"

"Evidence? I can't get any evidence against those doggoned burglars. They're too slick. But if they haven't stole fifty head of my cattle at odd times, I'm a Piute!"

"But you'll remember that I'm representin' law and order," warned Mr. Keegan solemnly.

"Sure. I'm for it. Give 'em law. Give 'em order. Soak 'em!" Mr. Barry arose vigorously. "Give 'em the whole works. Come on. Let's go!"

Mr. Keegan, encouraged but a trifle bewildered, returned to his car. The host joined him. Two husky cow-punchers, booted and spurred, took back seats. The other machines swung into line and then the official procession started on the long road uphill.

They passed through the colorful cañon. They turned up a long, twisty grade past hills of sage and mesquite where the hot sunlight brought perspiration. They came to the first pine trees. The trail led up to a granite country and then flattened out upon a great forested field carpeted with mossy brush and backed by a titanic slab of white-gray granite which was flanked by deep cañons and low hillocks on every side.

Amid the near-by trees were flashes of white tenting, a few vehicles, wickiups of burlap, much rubbish, many yipping dogs and a dark-faced aggregation of nondescripts who began to appear from various directions and aline themselves alongside the road.

Mr. Keegan decided to keep control of things.

"This will do," he ordered, braking his car two hundred yards from the nearest scowling Indian. "Stay here! The rest of this is *my* job!"

"We'll go, too," offered Mr. Barry, jumping from the car.

"No. You stay here."

Without letting his eager friend argue, the big deputy sallied down the rocky road and eyed the uncomfortable redskins in aged store clothes or faded overalls. In the midst of them was the powerful Henry Wolf. He had tried to sneak away, but the deputy had spotted him, so that he stood glowering, with feet braced and arms folded.

THE deputy marched up and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I arrest you in the name of the law!"

Henry Wolf yanked the hand away.

"You go chase yourself. Go home! Lemme alone!"

"You're under arrest! Are you aimin' to defy the law?"

Henry Wolf's murderous eyes looked puzzled and baffled.

"Where's that stolen auto?" demanded Mr. Keegan.

"You go chase yourself!" retorted Henry Wolf, recovering his passions.

"Go home!"

"Very well, then."

Deliberately Mr. Keegan reached backward to the holster under his coat, trusting to the moral backing of the armed men at the autos. He swung forth his pistol.

A desperate red hand grasped his wrist. Another clutched his throat. Two husky Indians twisted him around and pushed him off balance.

"Hey!" yelled Keegan.

"Let that white man alone!" roared Barry, near the autos.

The Indians, yelling, shoved Keegan to the ground. They gaped at Barry. Suddenly they scattered. They dived behind tents, wagons and flivvers.

"Get that big fellow!" screeched Keegan.

"Sure," promised the obliging Barry, swinging up his rifle and firing at a running brown body.

Henry Wolf slipped behind some trees. Barry's rifle spat at him. Another cowman opened up; then three more. The crackle of their guns echoed in Keegan's ears as he arose. A bullet sang over his head and spatted into a tree trunk.

"Get behind somethin'!" warned Mr. Barry. "They're firin' back."

An excited cowpuncher rushed ahead, waving his pistol.

"Come on!" yelped the man. "They're makin' for that cliff."

It was true. Assorted redskins in shirts of blue, red, yellow or pink were slipping through the trees toward the shining slab of granite. Some were armed, covering the retreat.

Mr. Barry turned rearward. His voice arose above the din:

"Steve! Jump in the car. Ride back home. Get all the boys out. Telephone to Sanders' ranch. Phone everybody! Let's finish this."

A Barry employee raced away, jumped into the machine and started it with a jerk. It disappeared in three seconds.

Keegan turned to the over-enterprising Barry.

"I'm runnin' this!" warned Keegan resentfully. "We're after one Injun. One! See?"

"Sure," placated Barry. "My mistake! Go ahead, then!"

The deputy peered past the trunks of the pines and saw the redskins, now racing openly for the granite slab. He glanced at their camp, where red-calicoed squaws were watching the affair without apparent interest except that two of them were toying carelessly with axes. He appraised the cowpunchers, working forward like skirmishers. Lastly he examined the wagons and the battered flivvers near-by. The missing auto was not present.

"Never mind; we'll get the man first," he muttered.

The first of the Indians reached the cliff. They started climbing up its shady lee side. Others followed. The deputy strode forward, pistol in hand.

"That's their old fort," remarked Barry, alongside him. "They've got water up there. It used to be their hangout when Injuns or white men licked 'em."

"Is there no way to run 'em out?" asked Mr. Keegan soberly.

"Well, we can take pot shots from the other hills. They're cornered. A few men can keep 'em lyin' down till they get tired of it."

Mr. Keegan felt piqued that a 1917 Buhack touring car of no particular value should promote itself into a large-sized Indian siege, but duty was duty.

"All right," he decided. "Send three men up on yon pinnacle. Put four men on the other side. Station two in the back hills. You and me and another man can hold the front. We'll keep that cliff surrounded!"

Barry's men obeyed. Mr. Keegan from a sheltered vantage point saw his flankers squirming over rock ledges and finally reaching eminences which, though lower than the tall fortress cliff, afforded ample shelter for riflemen. The reports of guns echoed through the hills at long intervals. The Indians seemed to be lying very flat.

TIME passed. Night came. There was a lull. Gun-flashes were far apart. Moonlight soon bathed the great cliff with blue-white radiance. The distant thudding of hoofs was heard from down the forest, growing louder until heavy dark shapes with rattling accoutrements pounded up to the edge of the woods.

"There's still more on the way!" reported a man in the rear rank, dismounting with the rest. "We've kept the phones sizzlin' from ranch to ranch!"

"Good!" said Barry. "Now, sic 'em! Go where Mr. Keegan tells you!"

Keegan made his dispositions, completing a tight blockade of the Indian fortress. More time passed. The sleepy Mr. Keegan decided to make the rounds. He strode forward to where the shadows of the trees ended and the rocky dry wash began. Moonlight turned the pebbles to jewels and the granite slab to onyx. Deep black shadows bounded the sides of the cliff. He peered up one of the side cañons, knowing he was too close under the rock to be reached from above.

Something moved.

He strained his eyesight against a flashing white rock in the dark cañon. A shadow changed outline. Keegan waited. The shadow enlarged and then struck a flick of moonlight. A man on hands and knees was crawling away from the side entrance of the cliff and across the dry wash. Keegan held his breath, praying that the fugitive might come near enough to make his capture certain.

The figure came toward the full moonlight, halted, looked about, arose to its feet and made a wild rush for the very shadows where the deputy was standing.

"Halt!" yelled Keegan wildly.

The two-legged accidental thunderbolt was upon him before he could draw his weapon. A flash of moonlight identified the newcomer—Henry Wolf.

With a snarl of passionate disappointment the bulky Indian collided with the deputy, but his own body was enwrapped by frantic Keegan arms. The Indian struck savagely. Keegan wrenched a fist loose. He struck back. They rolled over. The redskin grasped Keegan's throat.

The deputy tore the fingers away and pulled his enemy's nose out of plumb. The savage slammed at his eyes. The deputy writhed from under and shoved the big body away. The Indian started to come back, but heard sounds near-by. He jumped. Keegan grabbed his knees.

"Ya-a-a-a-a-a," grated the deputy. "You tricky ——! Runnin' away. I've got ye. I've got ye now!"

"Who've you got?" demanded a voice from the trees.

Desperately the Indian writhed away, kicking Keegan on the cheek as the maddened deputy tried to gain his balance. The Indian won free. He streaked across the moonlit dry wash. A shot blazed out from near-by. He dodged lower.

Keegan with a yell pitched after him, reaching for his flying shirt. The Indian won the shadows. Keegan tore after him. The redskin mounted a slab of stone. Keegan mounted also, dodging a boot which waved just over his head. The boot vanished. The deputy climbed after it, reaching upward.

He heard the Indian's body climbing just above him. He waved a hand and caught an ankle. He pulled. The ankle tried to jerk away, but Keegan pulled up it.

"Stop it, ye stubborn ——!" howled the deputy. "You're under arrest!"

A sudden vehement pile-driver fist caught him between the eyes. The officer reeled, lost his balance, pitched off a rock ledge, rolled over another, slid down an incline and bounced into a heap of dirt and pebbles. Barry rushed up, lighting a match.

"Well," observed Barry after a good look, "we gotta admit you tried, anyhow."

"Get that man!" raged Keegan.

"Sure," soothed Barry. "In a week or so. He's sure one bad Injun, all right. What started him wrong?"

"I don't know," said Keegan helplessly. "I don't know."

"Oh well, it may all be for the best. We can clean those burglars up. They ain't got much grub. They're cornered. Meantime, you'd better take a rest. You look sorter used up."

Keegan allowed his battered body to take repose, but he was awakened at dawn by the distant humming of a motor. A big red touring car, traveling in low, poked its powerful hood up the mesa and then slid along the level trail through the trees. It stopped in front of Keegan, disgorging dapper young gentlemen wearing puttees and golf-caps.

"WHERE'S the war?" demanded one of them.

The deputy, with a sinking heart, recognized them as newspaper men.

"There ain't much of a war," he evaded.

"No? Say, it's the biggest story in years! See this?"

The young man unfolded the 2 A.M. early edition of the *Enterprise*. Mr. Keegan's eyes popped. Mr. Barry looked over his shoulder. The whole top of the front page bore a shrieking headline:

INDIANS ON WARPATH

Under this, bold black type announced:

Redskins Run Amuck on Pine Tree Camp. Posses Gather From Northern Ranches. Deputy Sheriff Leads Attack. Casualties Expected. Governor Notifies National Guard to Make Ready. Artillery Ammunition Rushed to Armory. Whole Northern Frontier Reported Aflame.

"Murder!" gasped the horrified Keegan.

"Where'd you get that stuff?" demanded Barry.

"Some ranchers' wives phoned to town. The women are worried. They told the whole story. That's only the beginning."

Keegan sat down, overwhelmed. A faint popping was heard from the battlefront. The reporters whooped away.

"I've got to stop this," moaned Keegan.

"Aw, rats!" encouraged Barry. "Teach the doggoned Injuns a lesson!"

"No! I'll try a flag of truce."

He tied a handkerchief on a stick and marched forward. Firing ceased. Several scared coppery faces looked inquisitively from the top of the cliff.

"Stop this racket!" bawled Keegan. "Where's Henry Wolf?"

The big Indian stood up against the skyline.

"Come down!" roared Keegan. "Do ye want to stay in jail the rest of your life? Come down, and give up that auto or I'll have ye hung!"

The Indian hesitated, but only for an instant.

"You go chase yourself," he responded.

"You lunatic, what ails ye? Come down before we fill ye full of holes!"

"You lemme alone. Go home."

"Aw, plug him," urged Barry, impatiently.

The redskin heard it.

"You bums, you bone-heads, go home. Lemme alone."

With a sudden movement, the Indian dodged beyond the rim of the big rock and poked a rifle barrel outward, firing madly. Bullets brought down a shower of pine cones and needles.

"They're hopeless," urged Barry. "Sic 'em!"

"It's beyond me," wailed the baffled Keegan.

He heard a reporter yelling to another through the trees:

"Beat it to a telephone! Make this story sizzle! 'Redskins will fight to the death. Refuse truce. Fire on white flag. General attack imminent.' See? Put pep into it. Hurry!"

The messengers dashed away and climbed into their cars.

More riders appeared. Ranch owners arrived in their automobiles, some with women. A flivver smoked up the grade. Its owner started selling hot dogs, soda-pop and doughnuts on a plank between two trees.

The wild-eyed Keegan kept away lest he shoot some one.

An enormous six-seated auto came thundering up the mesa, laden with men and women. It was a big yellow rubberneck-wagon from town. The passengers descended. A stout woman with spectacles and a parasol sighted the maddened deputy.

"Say! Are you one of the fighters? Where is the battle?"

"There is no battle, ma'am," retorted Keegan in a voice trembling with passion. "It's a mistake."

"No battle? Why, they charged me four dollars for the round trip! They wouldn't *dare* do that, would they?"

Keegan lost control of himself.

"They dare anything around here!" he yelled wildly. "They're all crazy. Go home. Beat it. Get out of here, the whole pack of you. Go on—get out of my way before I murder somebody!"

"You're no gentleman!"

The square-jawed woman advanced.

"I paid four dollars in good American money to see this here show and I don't intend to take any slack——"

"Ya-a-a-a-a-a-a!" bawled Keegan, tossing up his arms.

HE saw a nice, cool, shady glade down the road, far from the madding throng. He decided to go there. He wanted to think, for matters were getting complicated. The place seemed ideal. He hastened toward it, but a big gray car screeched into view. Keegan halted. His heart surged with joy tempered by a slight misgiving as he recognized his boss, the peppery little gray-mustached sheriff of Gila County. The car stopped violently. The sheriff, with mustache bristling, leaped out.

"Explain!" he roared.

"I don't know, sir," reported Keegan,

truthfully. "Everything's sort of went wrong."

Sheriff Burke's gray eyes glittered.

"Don't know, eh? You'd better find out! A fine little stunt to pull off, just before election. Fine! Read this. See what you think of it."

Sheriff shoved forward the editorial page of the *Enterprise*. Keegan's horrified eyes read the opinion of that all-powerful newspaper:

SOME ONE IS TO BLAME!

There is war and insurrection on our northern frontier. Preliminary reports indicate that a bloody battle is now in progress in the mountains. As we lack detailed information we are forced to withhold judgment, but it is not hard to guess that some one in authority has bungled. under such conditions we are glad that the people will have a chance to deliver a stinging rebuke at the polls next Tuesday.

"Nice, ain't it?" snapped the sheriff.

Keegan's honest face was miserable. His loyal eyes, somewhat blue and battered, mutely begged for charity.

"I've come across the whole county," added Sheriff Bill pointedly. "It looks like some traitor has played me a dirty trick."

"No," gasped Keegan.

"All right. Explain."

Keegan, gathering his few remaining senses, mournfully told the story from beginning to end. The sheriff's gray eyes appraised him bitterly.

"You pinhead!"

"Why? What did *I* do?"

"I don't know, but it's plenty. I'm going to find out."

"Where you goin'?"

"Up that cliff."

Barry arrived. He heard the last words.

"Nix," he pleaded. "Lay off. They're dangerous. Don't stop things now. Lay off!"

The little sheriff stared at him.

"When it comes to layin' off," remarked Sheriff Bill, "that's somethin' you don't know much about. Shut up!"

Sheriff Bill walked to the edge of the cliff while citizens, with bated breaths, alined themselves near the trees. Keegan dutifully followed at the heels of his boss. A rifle barrel appeared at the top of the cliff and glinted in the sun.

Sheriff Bill climbed up the first rock ledge.

"It's murder," yelped a newspaper man.

"Stop," bawled Barry. "He'll kill you."

Sheriff Bill gave the speaker a withering glance and then climbed up another rock. Keegan followed. The rifle-barrel slanted toward them.

"I'm beginnin' to think that this is jest a passel o' pore Injuns skeered out of their wits," grumbled Sheriff Bill. "They act sorter dumb."

"You stop!" commanded a hoarse voice from up above.

"Sure!" agreed the sheriff, amiably. "Is that you, Henry? What in tarnation's got into you?"

The massive face of Henry Wolf appeared above the rock. He seemed to be vacillating, but his eyes focused on Keegan and his hatred leaped forth.

"You ——! You come up here, I blow your —— head off. You lemme alone. You —— go home. Go home! You bum, you fat-head, I kill you. I kill you!"

"Get out of here!" roared the sheriff to Keegan. "Jump! Quick!"

Keegan jumped. The rifle roared. A slug of lead chipped the rock above his head. Sheriff Bill, calm as a statue, stood motionless amid the thin smoke, indifferent to the frantic yells from below.

"Don't do that, Henry," coaxed Sheriff Bill. "No need to kill anybody. It's probably all a mistake. What's the trouble about?"

THE Indian slowly let down his gun. Other brown figures appeared and called to him; but he tossed out an impassioned hand.

"You make that —— fool lemme alone," he demanded. "Tell'm go home. Tell'm go to ——!"

"Sure. I'll not let him touch you," soothed the sheriff. "Now, what's it all about?"

The Indian considered. Sheriff Bill walked closer. Other redskins appeared from behind rocks. They faced the officer. At length Henry Wolf spoke sullenly, bitterly, accusingly—

"He try make me break my word!"

"Who? Keegan?"

"Yes." Henry Wolf beat his breast passionately. "Me good Injun. Me honest Injun. Keegan chase me, shoot me, kill me, because I keep my word."

"I'll bring him up here," promised the sheriff grimly.

"No!"

"Never fear—he'll not touch you. I promise. You know me. Hey, Keegan!"

The deputy laboriously climbed upward until he met the venomous glare of the redskin. Sheriff Bill stood between them.

"Now, Henry, tell how it happened."

The Indian addressed his own feet:

"All right. Long time ago, Red Jenkins do me a favor. See? All right. I say I do him some time good, mebbe. All right. That's all. He go away. Last week he come back, drive Buhack car. He want to keep car in my barn. All right. He say: 'Don't let anybody touch it. Nobody. Anybody come, chase'm off.' I say yes. I give promise. That's all."

"Oh," ruminated Sheriff Bill. "You promised to keep the car for him. Fair enough. And then my deputy came, eh? What then?"

The Indian's hateful eyes glared at Keegan.

"He say 'Gimme car or go to jail.' He talk jail-jail-jail! Me good Injun. Good Injun. He talk jail, irons, prison, kill me, you bum! You big stiff, you——"

"Never mind," placated Sheriff Bill. "Then what did you do?"

"I give my word. I keep Red Jenkins' car safe. I drive up here, see family, see friends, hide car. This man come bimeby, scare everybody, bring whole gang, chase us up cliff, shoot us——"

"You simple-minded maniac," yelled Sheriff Bill. "You mean to say you've turned the whole Southwest upside down because you promised a red-headed jailbird that you'd keep his car?"

"I keep my promise."

"Didn't my deputy tell you the car was stolen?"

"I don't care. I keep my promise."

"Blah! Where's the car now?"

"I hide'm. I keep my promise."

"Oh, yes. Of course. Well, will you give me the car?"

"No."

"H'm. Well, will you give me the car if Red Jenkins asks you to?"

"Sure."

"*Phew!* At last. You poor, poor, wooden-headed dumb-bell. And so you kept your promise. And *that's* what it's all about. You poor unregenerate, unwashed heathen, why didn't you tell Keegan that you couldn't break your word?"

The big Indian looked puzzled. He had never thought of this and now he milled it over till he came to a final decision.

"He didn't ask me."

THE loyal soul of Deputy Sheriff Joe Keegan was bathed in abysmal gloom for one day and two nights. He knew in his honest heart that he had spoiled Sheriff Bill's election chances. Sheriff Bill had uttered no reproaches on the return trip from the mountains. He had been extremely taciturn, but the heart-sick deputy went home and stayed there, pacing the floor of his little wooden house, striving to screw up courage to face his adored boss long enough to resign.

The Indian had come to town. Red Jenkins had been persuaded to give his august permission for the return of the stolen auto. The redskin was now heading a delegation authorized to dig it out of a mossy bower in a corner of Pine Tree Mesa. Everything was lovely except the sheriff's political career and Keegan's job as a deputy.

"I'll write my resignation," sighed Keegan at last.

"It's a shame," mourned his stout wife, with glistening eyes.

"Yes; but I'll not embarrass the boss. He'll be rid of me. Mebbe it'll help him."

The broken-hearted deputy scrawled out a formal communication and then slowly passed through sunny streets to the familiar office. Sheriff Bill was sitting behind his rail, feet on desk, smoking a cigar. Keegan halted miserably in the doorway. Sheriff Bill turned.

" 'Lo, Joe."

"I came to resign," croaked Keegan.

"Resign, eh? About that Injun mess, you mean? Oh, rats. Not this time."

The sheriff yanked a newspaper off his desk. He held it up. Keegan's amazed eyes beheld the front page of the all-powerful *Enterprise*. In the center was a big picture of his boss. Over this was a great black headline:

OFFICIAL QUELLS INDIAN UPRISING

SHERIFF BURKE CLIMBS RAMPART IN FACE OF RIFLES AND PERSUADES HOSTILE REDSKINS TO LAY DOWN ARMS.

Sheriff Bill triumphantly flicked the paper so that Keegan saw its back editorial page:

WE ARE FOR WILLIAM J. BURKE FOR SHERIFF. WE HAVE LISTENED TO CHARGES AGAINST THE ADMINISTRATION, BUT WE ARE COMPELLED TO BESTOW CREDIT WHERE CREDIT BELONGS. WE GIVE OUR ADMIRATION AND RESPECT TO THE MAN WHOSE SIMPLE DUTY IS SIMPLY DONE, WITHOUT HEROICS OR OSTENTATION. OUR COUNTRY HAS NEED OF HIM. VOTE FOR WILLIAM J. BURKE FOR SHERIFF.

"It means you'll be reelected," burst out Keegan, gladly.

Sheriff Bill arose and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Yes, thanks to you, Joe. You made a mistake, but it gave me a chance to make a grandstand play. We all make mistakes, Joe. You seem to do yours at the right time. Stay with me, old man. If you keep at it long enough, you'll probably make me president."

THE RIVER OF THE LOST SOULS

by F. W. Hodge

MORE of a matter of tradition that of recorded history, and yet having every appearance of truth, is the origin of the name of a certain well-known stream in south-eastern Colorado, the mutations of which are probably stranger than those that have taken place in any of the foreign names of our frontier geographic features that have survived in one form or another to this day.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century a small party of Spaniards set out from Santa Fé, New Mexico, to explore the country to the northeast, then entirely unknown. The altitude is great, and as the season was advanced, the little party was overcome by a snowstorm. Not returning to Santa Fé, their friends feared the worst, and in the following spring a band was organized to rescue the lost ones, if possible; but all they found were bleaching bones on the bank of a stream which they appropriately called *Rio de las Animas Perditas*—River of the Lost Souls.

Meanwhile the French were penetrating the region far to the southwest of the Great Lakes, and occasionally the Spaniards were disturbed by news brought to Santa Fé by Indians of the plains who had met white men that spoke a language different from that of the Spaniards, and who, in fact, were gradually pressing beyond their own frontier into Spanish territory, in pursuit of furs and trade.

Ever keen for knowledge of the practically unknown regions beyond their own limits, the French absorbed all the information available from the Spanish maps of what is now our Southwest, and so noted the name of the stream on which the party of Spaniards had perished.

It seemed to the French *voyageurs*, however, that a River of Lost Souls must bear some close relation with Purgatory, hence on the French maps of the period we find the stream labeled *Rivière de la Purgatoire.*

As time went on the Santa Fé trail became an entity, and more and more Americans followed its dangerous route over plain and mountain, ultimately settling here and there whenever Spanish authority could be evaded.

Now, the average American frontiersman of the period could hardly have been called a man of letters, like the justly famous Josiah Gregg, therefore was not quick to grasp the significance of such a meaningless foreign term as *Purgatoire*, which he forthwith translated into good American—Picketwire, which at least sounded as if it made sense, even if it does not.

But our more effete modern maps, with their tendency toward coalescence of geographic names, now record only the Purgatory or Las Animas River as an important tributary of the Arkansas of southeastern Colorado, while the Picketwire has been buried—perhaps with the bones of those who were indirectly responsible for the name.

The Scarecrow

by Sidney Herschel Small

A Complete Novelette

Author of "Bloomin' Idol Made o' Mud," "Down Dim Passages," etc.

THE white man had been dextrously followed from the moment of his faltering steps out of the Umoyabashi Station. The chase would have never begun had he climbed into a 'rickisha, for, despite his appearance, such action would have been indicative of money in pocket, or at least in prospect, either of which would have made him entirely valueless.

His two Japanese followers had been sucking oranges with gravely audible contentment, awaiting the train from which the white man had alighted, and which, after a short stop, would have taken them inland.

For some reason they seemed marvelously satisfied with themselves; they marked the foreigner's rumpled clothes and—more telltale—his soiled and collarless shirt; they eyed each other, nodded imperceptibly, watching him with suppressed excitement, all the while sucking on the oranges with increased satisfaction.

The shorter one, between mouthfuls of the juice, mumbled:

"The next train goes in three hours."

And his companion nodded; with that they seemed to have some plan in mind that went farther than the words. Dropping the now flat oranges to the station floor, both sauntered placidly after the white man.

The deep open gutters on either side of the street were awash, and the two Japanese men looked dismally at their foreign-type shoes, wishful of four-inch *getas* such as the few passengers from the train wore.

But when the white man did not hesitate, slopping stolidly through the sticky mud with never a glance at the waiting covered 'rickishas, they grinned swiftly, and set out after him. Before they had gone beyond the first twist of the street, where a vender of boiled black beans huddled in no shelter at all, the three men were wet to the skin, and the Japanese's kimonos hung in sodden folds, dripping water at the lower edges.

The latter two had opportunity to examine what they could see of the white man with no fear of detection; he never looked back, nor did he walk hurriedly, as one anxious to reach some destination and escape the rain. His head was held low, his steps varied curiously between a brisk stride — never long maintained — and an aimless, shambling gait.

The short Japanese made a deduction, and put it into words:

"That coat and the trousers cost a hundred yen; or more. A man who could pay

that will be able to do what we want of him."

"It might have come from a pawnbroker's," his companion said. "And if that is the case, Takagawa, we have wasted three hours, perhaps, and had a cold bath as well."

"Even so, we will know what we want him to know," Takagawa retorted. "All *seiyo-jin* know it, or almost all. Even *I*, from my two years in America, learned how, but with a different kind. But I tell you this, Kohara: That coat came from no pawnbroker. The front is wrinkled and dirty, but the back, about his shoulders, is as if it were a part of him. That is a sign it was made for him alone, and also that it cost much money. You will see I am right, when . . . *mah!* Now where does he go?"

The white man, as if suddenly aware that he had a place he intended going, swung into a side street with accelerated pace, reached the first cross-street and then, for the first time, stopped.

Fifty feet in the rear, the Japanese stopped also and began to talk as if they had met by chance, but, despite their play of animated conversation, both kept their eyes on the white man.

They could see, at the intersection where he stood, the leafless and topped trees, over which telephone wires stretched, marking the most important street of the foreign settlement, and both wondered if the man's indecision would become action, and that contrary to their purpose.

As he tugged and pulled at his soggy coat, and twitched his trousers higher, Kohara muttered—

"We have been soaked for nothing!"

But the other grunted him silent.

The white man slapped at his clothes as if to free them from water, changed the tilt of his hat, and, the Japanese following, turned the corner. He was lost to vision, and the pursuers increased their pace to a trot; they neared the intersection at a jog. Before either could warn the other the white man, running, came squarely between them, flinging Takagawa against the near building's wall.

"He did not even see us," Takagawa breathed, when they had set to the chase again. "He is the man for us. He intended seeing some one, but was afraid to. He has no money. He is dressed like a beggar. Nothing remains, but to discuss the matter with him. What did I tell you?"

"But if he says no?"

Takagawa shrugged his shoulders.

"He will not say no. I saw his face as he passed. He is hungry. A hungry man agrees to anything—if, after, he may eat." He laughed shortly. "I think he has fed on nothing save bitterness, which fills the mind, but not the belly."

The streets the white man took seemed selected for him by his feet; after the first headlong rush he walked slowly again, almost, the Japanese decided, with effort. He made unexpected turns into dim alleys, where an inch of water ran over the mud, making deep puddles in each depression.

"I am very cold," Kohara shivered. "Where does the fool go now?"

"He does not know. How, then, should I, impatient one?"

"Then why not stop him, and——"

"No. Wait. You and I, Kohara, are both wet and cold, and so is he, but he does not know it fully yet. He does not appreciate his position. There remains plenty of time before the train goes. Wait. You will see."

THE night was black overhead, and gave no visible sign of the clouds which drained steadily earthward. For the first time since leaving the station a man passed, a worker from the fields beyond the village, bare-legged to the hips and bare-armed to the shoulder, with a great roughly woven straw hat as protection. He munched a handful of shredded shrimp mixed with rice dough — *mochi* — as he walked, and Takagawa believed the white man raised his head, not to the peasant, but to the food.

Black, deserted streets again, and at last a feeble flickering of yellow light; with it, the smell of bad *sake* and worse fish. Before the foreigner was at the entrance to the eating-shop his pursuers could hear the hiss of the boiling pans, and the enticing slap of slabs of fish against rusty iron fry pans. To Takagawa's surprize the white man did not stop, nor even pause, but, head down, plodded past; when the Japanese were at the door he turned and walked toward them.

They met at the door.

Automatonlike, all three stopped, stood silent and faced the shop. Inside, maid-servants, ugly of face and rusty of kimono, rushed about with squat bottles of the same

shape as themselves, laughing and chattering with the eaters; even the Japanese, who were cold but not hungry, felt it would be pleasurable inside.

Takagawa nodded gravely about nothing at all, bobbed his head, hissed politely, while Kohara impatiently stood from one leg to the other and tried to shield his face from the rain. The white man paid as little attention to all of this as he did to Takagawa's introductory cough; he was not a half-foot away, but every particle of him seemed yearning through the door and into the eating-shop.

Takagawa coughed more loudly, found even that unavailing, and touched the white man on the sleeve. That the foreigner did not jump proved to Takagawa that he was unaware that he had been followed, and had no reason to fear pursuit; he turned very slowly, and faced the Japanese with blank countenance.

"Ver' good eat place," Takagawa said invitingly. "Fish good. Rice good. *Sake* pre' good. You like I tell man wha' you wan' eat? Yess? Me, in Amer'ca two year. You want?"

The corners of the white man's mouth twitched. He looked at Takagawa, but hardly seemed to see him.

Takagawa, whose eyes appeared discreetly veiled, nevertheless saw the lines in the gaunt face above his own.

"*Hai!*" he ejaculated at last, when the other did not answer him. "Let us go in." He smiled broadly. "I ask—you want—what? You tell. I tell eat-shop man. Yess?"

The white man fumbled in his pocket, clenched his hand over the coin he tried to draw out, had trouble because of the stickiness of the wet cloth, and finally held the coin out.

Takagawa saw a copper rin.

"Can—I eat anything—for that?" the white man asked.

Takagawa decided, before answering, that the voice would have been that of the seven-clawed Crow—if the Crow could talk, which Takagawa did not believe.

"You were right," Kohara grunted in Japanese. "He has no money."

"He has no money," the white man repeated in the same language.

Takagawa scratched his chin.

"Since you speak Japanese," he said, "I need not answer your question as to what a man may buy for a rin. Not—in these expensive days—even the strings for sandals! It is a shame, but true. You could buy food—a piece of fish, rice, tea—" the white man's eyes lighted—"at this eating-shop—" the white man took a half step forward toward the door—"*if* you ate first, and paid what little you have after. But in a place such as this you pay first, and then eat, and a rin would not buy the tenth of a bowl of rice."

With that he stopped.

The white man's shoulders took on a new, more pathetic droop, and he started to walk away.

"Where do you go?" Takagawa asked gently.

"What difference does it make to you?"

"None. None at all. But—" easily—"when I was in your country, I was hungry once, and a *seiyo-jin* fed me."

He whispered to Kohara:

"That is a lie, but it serves."

To the other:

"And so . . . I say this—if you would eat, Takagawa would pay. Is it a bargain?"

The white man stared at him.

"A—bargain?" he asked. "That implies something I do in return."

His eyes narrowed, and he raised his head high, so that the rain beat on his face.

"Anything you want," he said harshly.

"I spoke of nothing in return," Takagawa assured him fluently, and shoved Kohara away when the other protested.

As the three went through the door Takagawa whispered to his countryman:

"Wait, impatient frog! I know these *seiyo-jin*. We will all be on that train in an hour. But now you are to leave the *sake* alone—except a cup or two, perhaps. Remember!"

The inside of the place was hot, suffocating; cigaret smoke made a fog above the two long tables. Officiously, Takagawa pushed several diners closely together on a bench, and so made a place where three more might sit.

Giving the maidservant no time to approach, he banged on the bare wooden table and bawled loudly for bowls of rice and a whole pan of boiled fish and sauce, adding that if the tea were cool nothing would be paid for.

Moments later he was very busy at his bowl of rice, but covertly watched his guest

eat. He marked that while the hungry man's fingers trembled with desire, yet he ate slowly; this seemed to please Takagawa, and he pressed Kohara's foot under the table.

The fish became skeleton, the bowls of rice disappeared; the white man stared at the empty pan, pushed it vaguely aside, and, resting his elbows on the table, appeared, in the room's warmth, to have fallen asleep. Takagawa was half of that impression when the man said, without moving his head, and in English—

"What do you want of me?"

Takagawa sought for words in the same language, and then, giving over, said in his own tongue:

"Nothing. That is, almost nothing. A mere trifle. No more difficult for you than raising a finger."

"I thought so," the white muttered.

Takagawa grinned.

"You have not asked as to the reward—the payment for this trifle," he said.

The answer came at once—

"You have already paid."

Takagawa kicked Kohara a second time, as if to say—

"What did I tell you?"

He glanced about him, and then said, lowering his voice cautiously:

"Yes—I have already paid; and, considering what little is to be done, it is actually enough. But, when I was younger and less dignified, I was called the Generous One. Yes, they called me Yasu. I cannot help that I am that way. I have always been. So I will give you—" here Kohara held up both hands, with the fingers outstretched—"nine yen, for this mere nothing, and food into the bargain. What is desired from you will be told—later.

"Now, if your belly is filled, and you are warm, we will go out into the rain again, and back to the station. It is wet outside, but you can consider that where you sleep it will be dry and comfortable, which is something you did not have in prospect before we met."

IF THE food revivified the white man, he gave no sign of it as he followed docilely behind the Japanese. His perception was so sluggish that when they took a sudden turn he was but half aware of it, and often took a dozen unnecessary steps in the original direction. Kohara and Takagawa talked steadily in low tones, and when the station was finally in sight the latter shrugged his shoulders pityingly, as one who had been forced, to do something foolish merely to satisfy a childlike fear.

He walked slowly until the white man was abreast, and then said in a cheerful voice—

"You speak Japanese well."

The other said:

"What? Japanese? Yes."

"You live here a long time?"

"A long time."

"I am not so old," Takagawa said, "but I have seen many changes come in that time. *Mah!* The surprize it was to me when I saw an automobile for the first time, and that is only a few years ago. Ten, perhaps. I thought it a servant of the fire god, for it was old and puffed smoke. Now, I know better. I can even drive—that is, a little—the automobile that you move your feet to make things happen. I suppose that you, a white man, can drive *any* kind?"

"What? Yes. Any kind.

Kohara's face, with this, became less glum.

"I have never seen the inside of one," Takagawa went on smoothly. "It must be like the inside of a clock, having something mechanical to wind it up, possibly. I should have enjoyed making them go if I had understood what happened inside when I did this or did that. I always feared that it would stop, and refuse to move again—like the sacred bell of the temple in my village, which refused to ring in the middle of a ceremony: The priests said the god was angry because no money had been given the temple—I believed that, then, but know better now!

"The tales of the gods are stories for children . . . but what has that to do with *my* story? I say that, in an automobile, one minute you are going along, very happy and excited, and then—*mah!*—there is a cough like a baby who has swallowed rice grains uncooked, and what happens? Nothing! It will go no farther. If such a thing occurred to you, doubtless you would know what to do?"

"Yes. Doubtless. Once I was able to fix——"

Takagawa did not ask him what, and the sentence was never finished; the white man had probably already forgotten.

The talkative Japanese strutted beside his silent countryman after that; he grunted to Kohara that he had already known all of this; that any white man who wore expensive clothes—even if now torn and dirty—could make an automobile go, and, what was more to the point, fix it if it had stopped. What pleased Takagawa most of all was that his roundabout questioning had been successful, and that the *seiyo-jin* showed no interest in it beyond answering curtly.

At the station he bought an additional ticket, asking the white man, in English—

"What name is?"

"Brownell," he was told apathetically.

Takagawa explained to the ticket seller that this white man knew no Japanese, was very drunk, and that he, Takagawa, had been requested by another foreigner to buy a ticket and put him on the train. They both agreed that any one who would waste good money buying this man, who resembled a wet bundle of rags, a ticket was very crazy indeed.

On the nearly empty train—few passengers went into the mountains save at the time of the religious pilgrimages—Takagawa set a wordless but effective example to the man called Brownell by stretching at full length upon a long side seat of the car.

As the hovels about the tracks gave way to puddled snow-covered fields the white man slept heavily. Satisfied that he could not be awakened save by force, Takagawa joined Kohara at the opposite end of the car, showed no further interest and began to smoke silky Japanese-tobacco cigarets.

To a fellow-traveler, who seemed inquisitive, he said that he believed the *seiyo-jin* to be drunk, although he was not sure; all that he knew was from hearing him buy a ticket to Tsugamo, and that the foreigner, before sleeping, had given him a gold yen to be told when the train arrived.

Five hours later, Takagawa shook him awake.

FOR more than a thousand years the winding road from the little mountain village of Tsugamo to the monastery of Tsugamosan has been kept open by the passage of pilgrims; even if the road had closed over with thicket, the monuments of the dead would have pointed out the way.

Brownell had been given a few silver and copper coins, a half-consumed packet of cigarets and a number of instructions—all within minutes after leaving the train. He was told loudly that the road to the monastery was before his feet and could not be missed; in a lower voice he was told to take that road, to sleep at the monastery through what remained of the night and to wait Takagawa and Kohara in the morning.

When they arrived, he was not to know them. What would follow was to be left to them. After which eight yen—less the amount already given him—was to be his own.

The white man made no comment on the reduction from the agreed nine yen, and Kohara decided that Takagawa had been called the Generous One for a good reason. The two Japanese gave Brownell no word of farewell; to all appearances there had been a casual meeting, followed now by an equally casual parting.

The rain of the lowlands was, at this higher altitude, sleet and driving snow; before Brownell was out of sight of the tracks the front of him was plastered white, his face, also, as colorless as if it, too, was snow covered. His blue eyes seemed cold, glittering, and, like the bare-branched burdened trees on either side of the road, lifeless.

He plodded ahead listlessly, not turning his head when a laborer, leading a pack horse, shouted to him cheerfully.

If he was aware of anything it was that cold had crept up his legs and had begun to numb his body; his mind, he felt, was numb already, and had been for days.

At the first sacred, red bridge the steepest portion of the ascent was over; it had taken toll from Brownell, for his breath came in thin trickles of vapor from pinched nostrils. Beyond the second he stood before the temple gate; here sat a bronze Jizo, god of travelers and of children, exposed in semi-exile; Brownell had one flash of intelligence and life, wondering why this patron of weary wanderers hadn't been at the foot of the hill, to assist him to the top.

It was close to midnight, yet a clerk-priest huddled over a tiny brazier was awaiting travelers or pilgrims; he tapped Brownell's purse judiciously and, instead of assigning him a room, beckoned to a sleepy boy of six to take the *seiyo-jin* to one of the head-priests.

The urchin trudged ahead on four-inch

wooden *geta*, over a path along the edge of a ravine, lined on the right by trinket stores, now boarded up for the winter.

Snow lay a foot deep, adding seclusion to the monastery, shut in by forest and mountain. The numerous low buildings crouched behind their walls, only the roofs protruding; the snow-rounded tops resembling the tumuli of the dead, which stretched spokewise along every straight path leading to the monastery grounds.

The boy found an acolyte and delivered the white man to him; Brownell was taken through the gray rock-garden with its serpent fountain—not yet bearded with ice—and to a room like all inn rooms save that in the center of the mats was a two-foot square concrete firebox glowing warmly with charcoal. The priest left him standing there, and Brownell made no attempt to warm himself, nor to remove his stiff, icy coat.

A moment's loud laughter told that the acolyte had found one of his fellows; this subsided as quickly as it begun, and there was no sound other than the ripple of the serpent fountain in the garden.

At last—which Brownell did not hear—there were soft footsteps in the corridor; a bronze-silked priest with rice-paper register, a man wrinkled and very ancient. He entered the room, stood before Brownell, smiled courteously, coughed gently, and then, raising his head for the first time, met the white man's vacant eyes.

"*Mah!*" the priest grunted with surprize. "A blind *seiyo-jin!*"

If he expected contradiction, he got none and stood there undecided, scratching his chin.

He said, loudly—

"I am here, *danna-san.*"

The white man did not answer.

"Deaf as well as blind," the old priest muttered. "And he has come all of the way from Tsugamo, doubtless. I believe that the gods are in this business somewhere. *Hai!* if I were not a Buddhist I should say that this *seiyo-jin* is a reincarnation of ame-no-Kagase, the scarcecrow god; he looks like it, certainly; his clothes—" here the old man extended an exploratory finger, which began at Brownell's shoulder and ran down to his hand—"his clothes are like those taken from some rice-field. *Hai!* I grow old! What do I talk of clothes for? The man is cold. I have never felt a hand so icy.

"Perhaps he does not understand Japanese, and that is why I think him deaf. I am a fool. Well, if he is as deaf as he is cold, he is in a bad way. I—I had better discover if he really *is* deaf. I shall yell in his ear."

With that he stood on tiptoe, and bawled, "Are you hungry?" getting no answer. "Are you sleepy—will you rest?" No answer again. In a high, cracked voice the priest screamed, "What do you want?"

He got his answer this time, and so forcibly that it rocked him back on his heels.

"I want the jewels that were taken from the safe!"

Despite the sorry figure before him, the priest grinned.

"You will never get them here," he promised.

"No," the white man mumbled weakly; "I will never get them—anywhere."

"Then why did you say——"

He jumped forward with surprizing agility, and lowered the white man to the matting, calling loudly before his burden was on the floor. Before hurrying priests were in the room, he had time to exclaim:

"He is cold as death; all save his forehead. That is hotter than the charcoal in the firebox. I do not like it. His talk of jewels—*mah!* he does not know what he says! And I have stood here, figuring on this and that, while the man is sick. There goes the prayer bell. Well, for once it can wait."

A HALF dozen priests removed Brownell's clothes, and, after putting him in a kimono, wrapped him in quilts; the white man's eyes were closed and he gave no sign of life except the movement of his nostrils. The priest ordered hot water and tea. When they were brought he sat on his heels beside the quilted figure.

The prayerbell boomed again, four times; a boy shouted across the court, as if hurrying sleepy monks to assembly; one sang a droning song popular in the larger cities. At every fourth ringing of the bell there was a reverberant echoing grumble of a softer bell somewhere in the distance. Finally, the drawling monotonous prayer of a priest received a hearing despite the rippling fountain.

With the sleeplessness of age, the attendant priest moved only to blow up the firebox; he caught the first mutter from the white man. He did not ask him what he said or asked, for he was positive the other

was conscious of saying nothing, but, instead, came and squatted more closely beside him. Words came from the white man called Brownell, at first jerkily, then steadily; words of Japanese, snatches of English over which the priest shook his head, even—at the last—bits of song.

This lasted for nearly an hour, and then the white man became silent. The priest bent over him, and marked that where the head had been hot and flushed, it was at last beaded with perspiration, and, well pleased, the old man nodded happily to himself. Brownell's breath, too, came regularly and steadily.

At five, the priest stood up, stretched twice, and made his way to the temple along zigzag snow-cold corridors; it was easy for his eyes, accustomed to the glow-lit room in which the sleeping man was, to find their way about the altar chamber's sanctuary of shadows, where the darkness trembled with monks' droning and flickered with candle light; the gilt on the black lacquer shrines was like additional flames.

He sat on his knees before a *sutra*-table which faced those of the monks and priests, and these began to repeat the *sutras* rapidly and fluently; out of their prayer rose his own old voice in an assurance short and absolute.

The chanting began again, and, praying steadily, one by one each devotee approached the shrines and put incense on the burners, then resumed their places, awaiting the departure of Dobashi, the old head priest. Several monks, hungry and cold, began to wriggle in their robes, wondering what made the old one so devout this particular morning.

More than his prayers absorbed Dobashi.

He was trying to piece together what the fevered white man had said in delirium, and with indifferent success. He got from what the white man had said this: There had been lost something—jewels or gold—that had been entrusted to him. Other white men, however, believed the articles stolen, not lost. That, Dobashi thought, was always possible—for who can resist sufficiently large temptation?—save for the fact that the white man, being unconscious, had been unable to lie.

What had brought him to this isolated monastery Dobashi did not know, for the *seiyo-jin* had mentioned nothing about that at all. Dobashi was grimly aware that nothing of value was in the Tsugamosan monastery. The white man had, as his attire and condition verified, neither money nor friends, and apparently did not expect either again.

"He might as well become a monk!" Dobashi snorted aloud.

At these words the startled priests and monks stirred audibly, and Dobashi remembered where he was, and for what purpose. He stood, waved a dismissing hand, and shuffled back to his patient.

Brownell's eyes were wide open now, and gave to his face an even more emaciated appearance than when they had been closed. When Dobashi entered the room the white man sat up, trying to bow.

"Lie quietly, my son," the old priest said. "I feared that you were really sick; I am glad that you were merely cold and tired."

Brownell smiled unsteadily.

"Thank you for taking care of me," he said in what appeared to be almost a normal, controlled voice, unlike the choppy, monosyllabic answers he had earlier given Takagawa. "Is this the Tsugamosan monastery?"

At the priest Dobashi's nod, he added—

"What time is it?"

"Time," Dobashi said, "for you to eat. There is little fat on your bones, *danna-san. Hai! Furubite soshite yogorete imasuna—ikahodo ni itadakaimasu!* You looked old and dirty, when you arrived and I wondered, if you were a bundle of rags, how much you would bring! I never saw a hungry *seiyo-jin* before.

"Well, I have learned something. From the stories I had heard, I did not believe you white men became cold, or hungry, or thirsty, or had no money, or, except missionaries, ever stole."

He watched Brownell appraisingly at the last.

"You must not mind me," he added. "I talk much. But there have been few *seiyo-jin* ever come here, so you are a curiosity in a way. How long will you remain here?"

"I—am not certain."

"You came by accident?"

"Yes. By accident—no. I am to——"

"What?"

"I—do not remember."

Dobashi thought this out. Then he said, suavely—

"I go for food, *danna-san*—we could get along better if I knew your name——"

Told it, he tried it on his tongue until he had it as "Brownay," and then shuffled off to have food brought: Two soups, a plate of hard black beans and tea.

AS BROWNELL ate he remembered, none too exactly, that the two Japanese who had brought him on the train to the village below were to join him here. He wondered what they desired of him; something, he knew vaguely, that had to do with an automobile and its repairing. He decided no harm might come through questioning the old priest.

"I have heard of them," Dobashi said. "I have never seen one, however, for we do not leave Tsugamosan, we old men."

"Are there any at the village?"

"Doubtless some pass through on the Wide Road. One still night, not so long ago, I even heard what a young celibate newly entered said was one. *Mah!* it went with a noise like a thousand cicades clacking and humming. A very large sound, they make, for we can hardly hear the bells in the village. Do you want one of them?"

Brownell, heartened by the warm food, lighted a cigaret by a coal of the firebox.

"I? Why, no, I don't want one. But I was thinking that——"

"Yes?"

An interval, while Brownell drew heavily on the cigaret. Then—

"I am in no position to think about anything. I was just imagining things."

Of this Dobashi was not so certain. Almost sharply, he said:

"Those who are tired of the world come to us, my son. I think you are sick in mind. I am an old man—why not tell me? What I know I keep!"

"There is nothing worth telling. Besides, you would never believe me. No one believes what I might tell."

"There are many fools considered generally as men of sense," Dobashi retorted, smiling. "I know what it is to have stories disbelieved. *Hai!* for years the villagers have thought this monastery rich, possessed of great treasure illegally obtained, despite everything I have told them. We have enough to eat—some months—and places to pray and sleep, but the fools tell outlandish tales of our rich robes—" he patted the coarse fabric—"and our wealth, of which we have none! There are many fools, both white and brown, and who are they to say whether *any* matter is true or false?"

He righted a fold of his robe, and went on:

"There was one such, a Japanese, here a month ago, who laughed at all we did, at our cold rooms, our scanty food, when, he said, we might use some of our valuable treasure in the monastery and live like *samurai* in the golden days. I explained, but he laughed and laughed, and would not believe we were poor. There! I talk and talk, while I am needed."

A bell had been ringing, softly; Dobashi left to answer it. He returned with Takagawa and Kohara.

"Visitors, for you," he said, but did not leave the room.

Takagawa did not bow to Brownell, but said curtly:

"We are here. You will remember you promised us two yen apiece to show the way to the monastery, and to come for you again in the morning. Are you ready?"

Before Brownell could nod his head, Dobashi said gently:

"It was a cold night. Why did you not remain here, after showing the way?"

"There is too much praying," Takagawa grunted.

"Yes, there is much praying," the priest agreed calmly. "I must tell you, however, that in the night this *danna-san*—"

"*Danna-san?*" Takagawa jeered. "This scarecrow, you should say!"

Dobashi bowed gravely.

"Have it as you will," he said. "At all events, he was ill. Is it not too early to remove him, to have him walk in the cold to the village? He is welcome—you are welcome here."

"You do not understand this white man," Takagawa snapped. "He is as the fox, not to be trusted. And he had been drinking. But now he desires to leave. Come, white man."

Brownell stood up. He tried to express his thanks to the old priest, and reached a hand into his pocket for a silver coin, to offer the priest for candles for Buddha, but both Takagawa and Dobashi motioned for him to let be.

As he left the room, he felt the priest's wrinkled hand on his arm, and, turning miserably, found the old man smiling at him sadly. Dobashi said nothing, however, nor did he follow the three out of the sleeping room.

SNOW still fell, great fluttering dry flakes; every tree, from dwarf to cryptomeria, had its almost metallic outline, simulating impossibly white highlights. Priests summoned to prayer throughout the night had kept the paths open, but, outside the wall, the ways could only be told by the bordering mounds of the dead. These last varied in size from tiny rock heaps no higher than a man's knee to imposing piles level with the walls of the monastery itself.

Takagawa led the way out through the main gate, walked rapidly down the broad road until a glance told him he was out of sight of the porter's cubbyhole, and then swung to the right, back toward the walls, at an angle so wide that it was almost obtuse.

With Kohara and Brownell behind him, he reached the wall where it made a U curve inward, in the center of which was a low, narrow opening. With his back to the wall he began to follow, by means of the indicating burial mounds on either side, an invisible, snow-concealed path; he was completely absorbed in what he did, and counted the piles, both great and insignificant, audibly: *Hito, ri, futari, sannin, yonin;* counting each as a man, so as not to disturb vengeful evil spirits.

At the eighteenth he stopped and looked about carefully. Just behind it was a leafless fire-maple. This mound was of a size with its nearest fellows, a good seven feet high even without the heaped snow, and fifteen or sixteen feet long and wide; the sides rose straight to the top. In a corner rock was revealed, where the snow had slid away. Takagawa licked his lips, and then smiled. Even glum Kohara grinned sourly.

"This is it," Takagawa whispered happily. "There is no doubt. This is the one! *Yoh!* but we were wise to listen to that drunken story. And the teller of it even paid for the *sake* which let the secret out, and for that which we drank as well. He will come, that babbler, in another week to the day—and what will he find?"

He answered his own question, knowing Kohara never would—

"He will find nothing."

"It is good he does not find us," Kohara growled. "He was pleasant, being drunk. Sober, he is otherwise. I remember his knife—yes, I remember it well, and the way he showed it." He shot a hasty glance about. "I wonder if he remembers us, Takagawa."

"No. Never in the world. But what if he does?"

"That was a long knife he carried!"

Takagawa lowered his voice.

"He can whet his knife—when he comes in a week and finds everything gone—he can whet it for a white man, Kohara."

He stopped, at this, and examined Brownell frankly. The white man stood as dumbly as he had when they had first found him; dumb and totally uninterested. Yet, had Takagawa been less excited at what lay before Kohara and himself, he would have realized that any man, in any state of mind or body, would have found what was going on strange, and would have become alarmed at the foreigner's very lack of interest.

Takagawa did, however, put his mouth to his companion's ear as he whispered:

"And what if that babbler *does* remember us, Kohara? What do we care? He comes here, and finds some one has been before him. He asks at the monastery. He discovers a white man has been there! True, the white man was guided to Tsugamosan and back to the village again by Japanese, but white men never know how to get any where, and he thinks nothing of that!

"And who but a white man—or very few Japanese, and not ourselves, surely—can do what this white man is about to do? Did I not speak of all that at the station, when we saw him? Did I not say no suspicion would come on us; the one thing we feared? *Mah!* it would have been simple enough to come, to take what we wanted and go again, but, like you, I feared the babbler's memory and his knife! *Now,* if we are remembered, if we are asked, we know nothing. We are surprized! Is it not perfect?"

Kohara agreed that it was perfect by a nod of his head.

"It is good," he said. "If we had come and taken what is no more the tale-teller's—what was his name, Takagawa?—than it is our own, by ourselves, sooner or later he would have been after us. And I have no desire to join my ancestors yet.

"We were foolish to think of doing anything, without a white man, and the gods gave us one, and one half-witted at that! *Mah!* I hope he can do what he said he could! Then it will be more than perfect: You and I will hide in the second seat, and only the *seiyo-jin* will be seen."

Takagawa nodded.

"Let us get to work," he said. "Listen!"

They paused, and heard the four repeated rings of the prayer bell.

"We will be left alone for hours, while the fools pray. If they had known what we know, there would be feasting instead of fasting, and *samisen* instead of bells! Come, Kohara!"

With no word to Brownell, and apparently following a preconceived plan, they brushed the snow from one side of the burial mound, and began to remove the rocks; these were cemented only by dirt or mud, and the work went ahead rapidly. Sure of their complete isolation, certain that the monks and priests were all at their long devotions, no watch was set, although the two Japanese made no unnecessary noise.

BROWNELL walked slowly, apathetically past them, and leaned against the trunk of the fire-maple, an image of dejection. Some rocks had already been removed by Takagawa and Kohara, but a casual glance at the hole made told him nothing.

He knew, definitely, from his years in the Orient, that even undevout Japanese would have attempted not without fear what these two were doing so cheerfully; to tamper with a burial place was a serious offense, and apt to bring—the belief was—any lurking demons down on the offender hot-foot.

Yet Takagawa hummed tonelessly as he worked. Brownell could understand nothing of this happening. He mulled it over slowly: He had been followed, accosted, fed, all for a purpose, and that apparently leading to the minor repair of a motor car. And here he was, in a remote monastery's graveyard, watching two ghouls at their labors!

For the first time in months he was interested, alert. He had thought, all of that elapsed time, that nothing could excite him again, ever. That he had been done, finished. In a flash of bitterness he knew that he was to get eight yen—or was it nine?—for his part in the play; well, eight yen would keep him from starving for a time. Then what?

The old priest of the monastery said that only fools disbelieved everything. Well, then every one he knew, from the States' officials down, were fools, for none believed him or his story: Hadn't he explained over and over that he knew *nothing?* Hadn't he said that if he'd wanted to make way with anything valuable he'd had many a year in their employ to have done so? If there was a fool, it was he, for having worked so —— hard!

The Japanese had a hole large enough to walk through upright and, one on either side, were busy widening it. Brownell could see no reason for the continued labor; a place sufficient to allow entrance ought to be enough for any purpose. With the thought, he walked slowly away from his supporting tree and, at the mound, stopped in ill-concealed astonishment. Inside the mound, the burial place, was an automobile.

He had no time to think nor wonder. Takagawa, seeing him, grinned at him unpleasantly, although he had sufficient grace to blink twice.

"Ask no questions," Takagawa ordered. "This is what I spoke of, why I fed you when you hungered. It needs something done. Make it go. By that time we will have a space big enough to take it out. Eight yen you get."

Brownell walked into the mound, opened a door and climbed into the car-driver's seat. He pressed down on the self-starter, wondering, as he did, that the machine's ignition was not locked. Immediately after he got out and lifted the hood, discovering that the spark-plugs had been disconnected entirely. He wondered if this were all of the trouble, and, desirous of finding out, went back to the driving compartment to lift the leather seat and take out tools which would be under it.

Before he had it a foot up, Takagawa and Kohara were on his back, both at once, and had pulled him away from the automobile.

"What are you doing there?" they squealed at him.

Brownell said coolly—

"You want it to run?"

"Yes," Takagawa snarled. "To run. Exactly. And not to be examined, except—" a finger pointed at the engine—"except where necessary."

"There are tools under the seat," Brownell said quietly. "I need them. A plug wrench and pliers. If you want to get them instead of me, go ahead. But I must have them, if you want the automobile to run."

"I will get them," Takagawa informed him grandly.

"No," Kohara protested vehemently. "Not you! Me!"

They glared at one another like twin gods of anger, until Takagawa finally blurted—

"Well, we will both get them."

While Brownell watched curiously, they took the seat out of the car, lifted the hinged, slatted frame upon which it had rested and eagerly pawed the tools beneath away from the right-hand corner. Where Takagawa had both hands engaged, Kohara had but one. Brownell, growing steadily more interested, saw that the latter had kept one hand thrust into his kimono. The white man wondered if either knew the requested tools on sight, and repeated—

"A wrench, and pliers."

Both jumped at the sound of his voice. In the movement, Brownell saw Kohara's concealed hand emerge from his kimono, saw enough of it to be positive that it clasped a weapon, undoubtedly a knife.

The threat of the knife was all a part of the strange whole, and, under it, Brownell's frame seemed to assume a new, more virile posture. The hangdog air he had when he had left Dobashi in the monastery was gone entirely, and he appeared a man who had, in some inexplainable way, taken hold of himself.

"It is here!" Takagawa cried sharply.

Kohara muttered—

"Keep silent, fool!"

"Good," Brownell said, in a new tone, "Give them to me."

He had barely time to grab Kohara's stabbing arm; he held to it with force, not understanding what all this was about, but nevertheless desirous of discovery.

Takagawa laughed forcedly.

"Who is the fool now?" he asked Kohara.

To the white man:

"Leave go of him. We did not find the tools. But we found something else."

"So I guessed," Brownell said calmly. "If you have found what you want, get out of the way and I'll get my tools."

"Yes, get the tools," Takagawa repeated after him parrotlike.

"No," Kohara disagreed. "Not until *I* take——"

"Why you?"

"Because, Takagawa, I do not trust you!"

"Nor I you, cow-face!"

"Why not trust me with whatever it is," Brownell suggested. "And then I can get the car started?"

Of a breath, they both said—

"Who trusts a *seiyo-jin?*"

"It has been done before," Brownell smiled. He lighted one of the vile cigarets easily, and added, "Let me know what you decide, boys."

They wrangled in silence, gesticulating with their hands in pantomime, and finally Kohara agreed to permit Takagawa to become custodian of a small, paper-wrapped parcel six inches long and one thick.

"If you fool me, Takagawa, I will——"

He left it unsaid, but Takagawa, shivering, whispered renewed protestations.

Brownell asked no questions. From the strained attitudes of the two Japanese, he decided that it would be worse than unwise. He found his tools, got the spark-plug connections made and again stepped on the starter. The engine turned over, but no explosions followed. The engine, Brownell realized, was cold, and, at minute intervals, he pressed the starter down.

THE engine coughed, as preliminary; coughed a second time and a third; stopped. Brownell started it again, and it began to run, jerkily. The mixture, in the altitude and cold, was too lean and, the engine still sputtering, he got out and turned the thumbscrew to adjust the carbureter-spring to richen the mixture.

The engine began to run more easily. Brownell was half of the mind to give it another quarter turn, when, above the uneven idling of the engine, he heard a new voice; new, and yet strangely familiar, although he did not recognize it. That it was a Japanese's was positive, but he knew many Japanese.

"Stand very still," the voice said. "I have never shot this gun before, and should like to see how it works, and what it will do to a man's head."

The tone was as ominous as the words, and came from the far side of the car. Brownell, still stooping, made his way, always out of sight, to the driving compartment, and from the tool-kit selected a fourteen-inch wrench. Then he waited. He did not know what was going on, and saw no reason for finding out too hastily.

Takagawa said something, although Brownell did not catch the words, and then the new voice said sneeringly:

"Am I to believe that? It is a story for fisherwomen! You thought the treasure of the temple was concealed here? *Mah!* Are

automobiles relics of a thousand years ago? By the horns of Jizo, you have made it run."

Takagawa muttered that when he was in America——

The other cut him short.

"I must have been very drunk that night," he said. "I must have told all I knew. That I was coming here—knowing the place—and leave the machine and the package, and return to my work, so as not to be suspected. I do not remember *what* I said, but it was enough; I do remember *you*, and the pickle-face who was with you then. Where he is?"

Kohara had been drunk as well, Takagawa admitted, and knew nothing. He was, of course, not here. Takagawa did not know where he was. Why, Takagawa wondered, had the newcomer come a week ahead of time?

"Because," he was told, "the thing has blown over. I became very lazy, purposely, and so it became necessary to discharge me, as I had hoped. Well, you are here, and I suppose I might as well give you a sop, and keep you quiet, since you know too much. I do not feel like killing, this morning. If three had been two of you, it would have been different."

Brownell had heard the voice before. He peered, while the man talked, over the dash, and then made a choking noise in his throat, and would have hurled the wrench had the windshield not been in the way. For he had looked up just in time to see Kohara come behind the figure of the newcomer, and take him with the knife just below the left shoulder-blade.

"It appears that the new gun was worthless after all," Kohara said, in a very cheerful voice. "Like you, Takagawa, he talks too much. Or did. And what has it brought him?"

Takagawa cried shrilly—

"*You* did it!"

"Never in the world," Kohara said. "The white man did it, and we saw him!" and both laughed immoderately at that.

Suddenly Kohara said explosively:

"It would be delicious, but—we will not do it. We will leave *it* here, and if the white man says anything, we will have the body to point to, and so he will say nothing. Not that he knows anything. Well, the automobile is ready. As soon as I see if he has any coins about him, we will go."

He bent over, stopped, stood erect.

"It would be bad luck," he decided. "*Seiyo-jin!* Come here! Your eight yen are in this man's pocket. Come and get them. If there are more, they are mine."

As Brownell came around the car, Kohara eyed him.

"What have you seen?" he demanded.

Brownell did not play the fool.

"Enough," he said.

"See to it, then, that it is not too much," Kohara told him sharply. "Get your eight yen. And then take us to the village. I will tell you then what city to take us to."

The light inside the mound, in spite of the new opening, was none too good, but Brownell did not need it to tell him that the stabbed man had been the porter about the offices that he once had charge of. He said nothing, and reached inside the kimono to the slit pocket, from which he gingerly took a small coin-purse.

Kohara grabbed it, and counted out four yen, saying that the remainder would be given him later. In the purse were, folded tightly, a few oblongs of currency, and these Kohara unfolded. In the center was a bit of paper.

Kohara opened it, and held it to the light.

"What does it say?" he asked Takagawa.

"It must be the value of—" Takagawa winked—"of the temple treasure."

"What does it say," Kohara wanted to know.

"I do not exactly understand," Takagawa said. "It says 'ninety-one, ninety-one, forty-five, seven, seven, twenty.' I wonder if those mean thousands of yen or dollars," he concluded in a hushed voice.

Kohara scratched his head, letting the wonder of it sink in. Then he said happily:

"Let us go, Takagawa. And, remember, I shall be right beside you, and what you carry! Remember that!"

Brownell's face was a study; in it was a fierce happiness and, at the same time, indecision. What the Japanese did not understand, he did. What meant a valuation to them, meant something vastly different to him. But, at this place, with one and possibly two armed men against him, what could he do, and how? The wrench, he decided, might care for one, but never for both.

Nor did he want them killed; he wanted

them so they might tell their story. Otherwise, he was but little better off.

The written figures would help, but, alone, were not enough.

THAT eyes could have been so keen, so swift, so certain, to have observed and recorded his always rapid manipulation of the office safe was wellnigh unbelievable, and yet it had happened. The clerks had been questioned, but all were white men, all—as he had been—beyond reproach, and none knew what the safe had, one night, contained.

He had. He had placed the precious shipment of jewels and jewelry in the safe for one night, that night, only—and they had gone. None, save himself, knew the combination, yet the safe had been opened, and opened at the time he had been playing with Nippon Copper stock.

What more natural than the belief that he had taken them, especially since he had been called, the next morning, to go to the station and meet a customer, who had not come!

But one of the State officials had; the safe had been opened by him; chance had it that a clerk had seen him at the station, waiting. Then he had been ignominiously taken back to the office, since he lingered at the station for the next train. He did not, of course, have the valuables, but it was felt he had concealed them.

Now, *if* he could get possession of the jewels, and *if* he could capture one, at least, of the Japanese.

How? He did not know.

As he got into the car, he decided that it was not simple. Suppose the Japanese said that they had been paid by himself, or that they had come upon him in the very act of killing the porter, wouldn't it be considered that he and the porter had been together in the thing?

Suppose he stopped the machine in the village, where he'd be fairly safe, and demand that they be arrested; what then? He was not certain.

His head, he knew, worked none too clearly; there had been the terrible walk in the cold and, before that, long foodless days and sleepless nights.

Muddled as he was, he determined that whatever he did must be done soon. What condition he would be in later he did not know. All of the trouble, flooding over him anew, was making him impotent, almost frightened, and he felt very weak. The flash of spirit, of strength, he had before had deserted him entirely, but in a dull, dazed way he knew he must make some violent effort.

Automatically, he slipped the clutch and put the car in low gear, ran it out of the mound, and, at a word from Kohara, stopped. The Japanese, very rapidly, but nevertheless with care, blocked up the opening in the mound again, and, with a branch from the maple, swept snow about as well as they could.

"It must do," Takagawa said. "I hear the end of the prayer hour. Let us get away."

Kohara nodded agreement. As he clambered into the back seat he said grimly:

"If we had known that what is left in the mound could have been disposed of so easily, and been so little trouble, we need not have taken such care to cover our tracks from him or any friends he might have. *I* think he was foolish to have saved his money and bought this automobile, but there is no accounting for tastes.

"Where you like *geisha*, I prefer *sake*. The white man has become almost a nuisance, and—*Hoi!* do not get in the front seat, Takagawa! I want you beside me, where I can see you! Remember that you have what you have! Come in back with me!"

"If I sat with the *seiyo-jin* I could know exactly what he does, for I understand a very little of how these kind of automobiles move."

"I want you here," Kohara insisted. "I trust you when you are beside me."

Takagawa, mumbling to himself, got out and into the rear seat.

The white man felt that two pair of eyes were on his back. He could hear them talking earnestly, as he again started the car forward along the mound-lined way. Cold had begun to numb him doubly, after the ministrations of the old priest, the hot tea and quilts; it came to him that there was nothing he might do—that whatever was done he would have a part in, and that part no better or more important than the one already played by the porter.

Where he had earlier tried to decide upon a sensible method to regain what had been stolen twice, he now was concerned for his life, and yet it seemed almost less important than the other. For a split second he

thought of running the car off the bank, when they were going on the village road later, but gave over; what would that prove, even if the jewels were found on Takagawa?

He wanted to live, but not as he had the past month; never like that.

"Fast, past the gates," Kohara ordered.

Brownell saw that two priests were under it, and, suddenly grimly perverse, slowed the car and, fifteen feet past the gate, shut off the ignition.

"It will start in a moment," Brownell murmured.

"*Yoh!*" Takagawa snorted. "I saw what you did! *That* is the same in all cars! I know! And, *seiyo-jin*, I say that later——"

He had no chance to say it, for the two priests, curious, hurried to the car, and began to question Takagawa: Where had *this* come from? Why was it here? The priest Dobashi had refused money from the *seiyo-jin*, believing him poor, but now it appears that he owns one of these wonderful wagons without a horse. How was that?

Takagawa said suavely that he did not know about the last, but that white men were seldom as they seemed. To look at the white man, he appeared poor as a scarecrow, but who could tell? They—he and his companion—had been terribly surprized when the white man showed them the machine, which had been concealed somewhere in the woods. *Seiyo-jin* were all crazy, anyhow.

At this the priests nodded their heads. That was a well-known fact.

The priests were both old, emaciated; there was no help in them, Brownell knew. What had he stopped for? What good had it done? True, if he started a fight, monks would come running, but too late to do him any good. And he had antagonized Kohara and Takagawa terribly.

While Takagawa continued talking expansively to the priests, how this was his first ride and how the automobile was able to go, Brownell saw the old priest Dobashi hurrying down the path. In a moment he was through the gate; he, however, went directly to Brownell, ignoring the two in the back seat, and said frankly—

"What now, my white son?"

Brownell knew that the Japanese behind him were trying to talk and listen to the priests and hear Dobashi and himself as well. He did not falter; his coolness seemed, at this instant, to have chilled him to determination.

"I am—" glancing at his clothes—"as I am because of something which was taken from me."

"You spoke of jewels," Dobashi whispered.

"Did I?"

"In fever. So it was true. Well?"

Swiftly—

"Bear that in mind! Now, I am going to try and get them! You will tell what you see?"

"And what I heard from you."

"Stand back, then," Brownell said quickly.

HE glanced about, and saw that Kohara's eyes were wild with anger. What Brownell had said Kohara did not know, but he believed naturally that it had to do with the killing. Where there had been one, Kohara had already decided, there would now be two.

Brownell gave him a grin for his glare, took in the position of the car, the objects about him, and then faced forward coolly.

"Go!" Takagawa snarled in English. Then, in suave hissing Japanese: "The white man is about to depart, honorable priests. If you will not remain too closely about—you might be hurt, otherwise——"

They gave the car plenty of room.

Brownell advanced spark and gas together, until the idling of the engine became a purr. He gave the gas by the hand throttle, and several times pulled it halfway across the sector, so that the engine roared. It ran steadily, evenly, and, as it warmed, with increasing power.

The Japanese on the rear seat believed that the white man was showing off for the benefit of the priests and for Dobashi as well, and most of their former fears about Brownell's conversation departed. Again Brownell increased the flow of gas, and the engine roared, then died down to a throb.

He turned to the back seat, his eyes taking in every detail about, and said, steadily—

"Are you ready?"

"Go, go ver' fast!" Takagawa sputtered in English.

"Right!" Brownell said in the same language.

With the engine purring, he released the

hand brake, slipped the car into low, threw in the clutch, let the car run its length, and then slipped the clutch again, all as he had done a dozen times before, in getting to the gate. He made, Takagawa's keen eyes were aware, exactly the same motions with the little "stick" in the middle; first pulling it toward him, and then shoving it away so the car would move faster.

Takagawa's watchful eyes were keen, but no eye, not even that of the dead porter, could have possibly followed Brownell's swift shifting of the gears.

The engine changed its hum; it beat on the ears now like surf on rock. Brownell engaged the clutch suddenly, and, as he did, pulled the throttle nearly to the end of the sector. The car leaped violently backward, almost skidding on the powdery snow; Brownell held to the wheel a moment, twisting it slightly, and as he did started to slip from behind it.

Fast as he was, Kohara was faster.

Thrown forward by the lurch of the car, Takagawa had slid to the floor, but Kohara had been hurled straight ahead, and now wound his arms around the white man's neck an instant.

Brownell had not figured on that.

The arms about his neck tightened for the length of a single beat of a crow's wing, but Brownell made no spasmodic effort to release them; he would, he knew, in an instant——

There was a crash, and the sound of splintering; Brownell was pulled clear from the seat as Kohara held to him, but was thrown sidewise by the impact.

The car had, as Brownell planned, backed into the side of the great wooden sacred gate, the *torii*. Had Kohara and Takagawa not been hurled from their seats before, when he was not ready for them, he and the wrench—still on the front seat—would have done the work. While the priests yelped, outside the car, Kohara's hands were already busy, and Takagawa was joining him, panting for the *seiyo-jin* to come to his senses.

Under the impact, the car had definitely stalled.

Brownell began to fight back bitterly now, oblivious to any words, and the floor of the car was a mess of straining bodies. Slowly that of Brownell was pressed underneath, slowly, but inevitably; worn, tired, he was no match for the two. Kohara grunted acquiescence as he listened to Takagawa's whisper not to kill the *seiyo-jin* here.

Priests, without understanding, circled about; Dobashi told his beads feverishly, impotent with age.

Brownell's hands were pinned down, and Takagawa was terribly busy at his throat. To choke sense into him, he found time to yell at the priests about; the white man, he added, had gone crazy. The white man struggled violently, but to no purpose.

As everything became suddenly dark, and his ears roared with sound, he believed that Kohara must have used his knife after all.

THERE came to Brownell a steady, soft, monotonous sound, and for a moment he wondered how the engine could be still running. He had been positive that he had stalled. That he knew this sound for something else, something lower, more cadenced. As he opened his eyes he was aware dimly that the back of his head ached frightfully.

He found Dobashi kneeling beside him, and, involuntarily, shut his eyes again.

The sound continued, and gradually Brownell knew it for what it was—the serpent-fountain in the monastery courtyard. He must, then, be in the temple somewhere.

He had come that night, and was waking up. He had been sick, cold.

Remembrance flooded over him, and he raised his head.

Dobashi smiled at him, started to speak, but Brownell said thickly—

"Are—the two Japanese—gone?"

"Yes," Dobashi said. "Gone."

This, Brownell realized, was the answer he expected, the only one possible. The wonder was that he still was alive. He had done what he could, but it had been poorly planned; he should have considered that the sudden backing of the car would have jerked the Japanese from their seats, and acted then. Well, it was over.

"I think," the old priest said, "that if they return in any form at all, it will be as toads."

Brownell did not move.

He said fearfully—

"What do you mean?"

"They are very dead indeed," Dobashi told him gently.

"But—how—"

"The temple gate was old. Very old. Older than any ancestors on the tablets. And when the wagon-without-horses hit it,

down it came! On the two. You, only, being underneath, were saved. Your head, indeed, hit upon the floor, but that was all."

Brownell said quickly—

"There is something one of them had in his kimono that I need."

Dobashi produced the packet.

"This?" he asked. "I brought it here for you."

"And you will, if asked, tell what happened? How I came? And what I told you while I was sick? And——"

"I will tell," Dobashi promised. "And, guessing your story, I will see to it that it is believed. Now, white son, you should sleep."

Controversially Brownell said shakily:

"No, I must get back to Osaka! And tell what I know. I must!"

"There is no hurry in this world," the priest retorted, smiling. "But, first, in friendship, we will have tea together, and you will tell an old man what makes the strange wagon go and how much they cost in gold?"

Tea was brought and drunk, and at last Brownell stood up.

"I look like a scarecrow," he said. "But it doesn't make any difference now."

"No man is ever all he appears to be," the other told him. "Even a priest, a man of peace, may— *Mah!* of what do I talk? Come, I will walk to the fallen gateway with you."

Brownell was silent as they crossed the courtyard; his knees trembled but he knew he could make the walk back to the village of Tsugamo safely, and that the eight yen he had would take him to Osaka, he, and his precious burden. He was tired, but perfectly content.

He thought suddenly of something else, and spoke of it to Dobashi.

"I remember fighting on the bottom of the car," he said. "And I remember, of course, smashing into the gate, although the way the automobile skidded I was afraid I'd miss it. But it seems funny that the old gate didn't topple immediately." He paused, and then went on: "Probably our fighting in the car rocked the gatepost, which was weakened, and that did it."

Dobashi said nothing.

Curious, and doubly so because of the other's queer prim expression, Brownell asked—

"Was that how it happened?"

"I have this day one sin upon me," Dobashi said slyly. "I had better not make it two, by lying. *Yoh!* but I saw that great gate shake, first when it was hit, and after, while you were all fighting; I did not see you, so knew you were beneath."

He stopped, clicked his beads halfway round, and then held out his arm, bearing it to the scrawny elbow.

"I prayed for you, white son! How I prayed, and——"

"In return for your prayers, there will be a reward, when I give back what I have recovered. It shall come to you with my thanks. For what I have in my pocket——"

He stopped, took out the packet, and opened it, cutting through several wrappings of paper and string with the edge of the coal tongs.

The old priest waggled his head as the last wrapping of oiled silk was removed.

"*Hai!*" he whistled in his breath gustily. "I have never seen such jewels before, like the water when the sun-goddess is over it; and those like the pink heart of the lotus; and the white ones that shine—but I like them least of all! No wonder there was anger at you when they disappeared. Look at this"—holding a sapphire between his fingers—"it is a piece of the sky at night. I have never seen such things before, my son!"

"There will be a suitable reward," Brownell repeated. "I'll see to that. If you hadn't——"

"A priest may accept money only for personal labors," Dobashi said sorrowfully. "All prayer money goes to the treasury to be used for food and robes and incense, and gilding the gods. If I am very lucky, there will remain a few coppers for tobacco, and perhaps a new pipe."

They neared the fallen gate and smashed machine beneath, when Dobashi whispered gleefully:

"Prayer, my son, is very great. *Mah!* and while I prayed I saw that the gate would soon tumble. I prayed for it to fall quickly, and on the devils who held you down. But it did not fall! And so, praying continuously, I went to the far side of the gate and pushed on the broken post. *Yoh!* how I pushed! Of course, it was the prayers, but I am of the opinion that the gods will say very little if I keep some of the reward for myself!"

For a half-hundred yards after Brownell left the old priest, he could still hear him chuckling.

Mountains of Mystery

Conclusion

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The King of No Man's Land," "Tiger River," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

ALTHOUGH they had fought side by side in France, found wealth along the upper reaches of the Amazon and traveled in many odd corners of the world, their wanderlust would not let them rest.

So they started out again—Captain Roderick McKay, Lieutenant Meredith Knowlton and Sergeant Tim Ryan—to explore the Venezuelan upcountry in search of the fabled white Indians.

At Ciudad Bolivar they hired as a guide Portonio Mariano, a native well acquainted with the Rio Orinoco. And at San Fernando, up the Rio Ventuari, the plotting governor of the district supplied them with two more men to act as pilot and handy man.

While they slept on a playa in midstream, one night, the two San Fernando men stole the motor launch and left the party stranded. They awoke with a start when Portonio shot a jaguar, which had swum the river to attack them. A little later in the day they were rescued by Lucio León, called "Loco" León by the people of Ciudad Bolivar, because of the weird, strange tales he told of the unknown hinterland.

He was a well-to-do trader in balata rubber, and, owing to his fair treatment of the natives, the Maquiritare people were devoted to him. The governor of San Fernando, however, hated him and had sent out some men to "remove" him. They had failed.

The friendship that sprang up between the Latin and the three Northerners was spontaneous. Hearing of their plans Loco León offered to accompany them in search of the white Indians, although he refused to say whether he knew of the existence of these people.

That night the party stopped off at León's *sitio* and a small band of Indians from the Caño Tamara, came to seek information about the three newcomers.

While León talked to the spokesman Tim Ryan went out to look over the other Indians. Just as he was about to move on he asked abruptly:

"How many days to the place of the *blancos puros*?"

"Twenty days," came the unguarded answer.

After dark, when all was quiet, the natives vanished to carry the news of the strangers' coming to the Talking Mountain.

Next day the four white men started upstream in dugout canoes and reached the Equencua Falls, where they disembarked and started on the long portage to the head of the rapids.

THEN on again, up the ever-narrowing river, they fought their way, until they reached the cataract of Oso, the Bear, where they found four Maquiritares, whose skins, instead of being light in color, were black; a dirty, granulated, dingy black.

These men, León explained, were the victims of their wives' jealousy. The latter, fearing to lose their men, had given them the juice of the *sehi* fruit mixed with *yacuta*, or manioc, which had changed the pigmentation of the men's skins.

Farther up the river, in the dead of night, a man's voice rang out—the voice of a man who had once been civilized, the voice of an American! White was the madman's name. He had married a native woman and she had given him of the *sehi* to drink. The change in his appearance had made him mad, and he would allow no white men to see him. He vanished when León spoke quietly to him.

After losing a boatman at one of the cataracts, the party reached Uaunana, where they were met by the Maquiritare chief, Juacinto. Reluctantly he agreed to lend León two guides to go up the

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Periquita, the river of demons, which led to the home of the *blondos*.

Six of León's men deserted when they heard the news, and only nine men set forth on the fateful journey: The four white men, the ever-faithful Portonio, and four natives.

For six days all went well, then in the night, without sound, the demons struck. The four natives were spirited away without sound or sign of struggle, leaving behind their weapons and belongings. They vanished, and the canoe with them.

When dawn came León found a blowgun dart fastened to the trunk of a tree. And the dart was pointing down a barely discernible track.

"A token and a guide," said León.

"Token of what?" puzzled McKay. "Death?"

"Cap, it's a traffic sign:" broke in Tim. "It heads west."

"Good," said McKay. "Let's go."

FOLLOWING the trail they reached the savanna, a waterless land of stunted trees and blazing sun.

Not once did they see a human being, but whenever they went astray smoke pillars arose to guide them back to the path.

They came within sight of a mountain, squat and foreboding, which sent back to them the sound of their voices, sharp and clear. As they came closer they saw a woman standing at the mouth of a cavern, signaling to them. The woman was white. Spurred by an oncoming storm they quickly crossed the intervening space and entered a dark passage just as the rain broke in torrents. The woman was gone, but they were joined by two blue-eyed, white skinned men, who led them up and up through recesses in the mountain to a chamber where an old man croaked a greeting.

He offered them food and drink, but the drink was the terrible *yucut' sehi*. They refused it. Then the old man threatened them: They must drink or die, and if they drank they must marry the white women living there so that new blood might be infused into the tribe.

At his summons the white folk came in. All too obviously they were a dull-witted, degraded people, the victims of inbreeding.

When León and his companions refused to obey the old man, they were attacked and thrust back toward an opening in the chamber covered with a screen of palm leaves. Step by step the five were forced back through this screen. And beyond was a drop down a steep muddy slope into a great pit in the mountain out of which there was no escape.

The old man, from the head of the slope, again made his offer: Either they drink the *yucut' sehi* or they die. Again they refused.

Then came White, the madman, mocking them. McKay cursed him and stung him with insults. His curses had the desired effect. In the night White lowered a rope, but before any one of them could climb it, White was thrown down among them and the rope jerked away.

The old man's voice rang out:

"The black white one would be white again. Turn him white, strangers!"

A fiendish chuckle, then silence.

CHAPTER XXII

BLACK WHITE

A LONG time passed before Black White recovered consciousness. During that time the other inmates of the dungeon remained beside him. There was no use in moving him, nor any means of reviving him. As for any further attempt to scale the acclivity nobody even suggested it.

As the first burning disappointment of failure passed off, they sought solace in tobacco. By the brief light of their matches they snatched swift looks at the "dead man without a face." First, however, they had cleared that face of its mud and blood, scraping it with ungentle but not unkindly fingers; and now they found that its features were as good as any of their own.

The mouth and jaw were masked by long, unkempt black beard, but the nose, eyes, brows, and ears were regular and the head well shaped. Like the long body, clad only in an Indian loin-cloth, the countenance was gaunt of contour and livid of hue. But, so far as the first cursory view showed, it was not mutilated. White's ghastly description of himself had been but the hyperbole of dementia.

On the back of his head their searching fingers found a swollen wet gash—the wound left by a savage blow dealt from behind while, probably, he was struggling with some other assailant. What had taken place in the cave was quite apparent to the investigators. Goaded by the torturing "change of heart" on which McKay had gambled, White had lurked there until he saw the dogged attempt of the captives to ascend; then thrown out the coil of rope, braced himself, and acted as anchor for the first climber.

But something—probably Tim's outbreak—had brought others to discover what was going forward, and those others had sprung on the traitor. Whether they had deliberately thrown him into the pit after knocking him senseless, or whether he had toppled over the edge as the result of the blow was not clear. It was plain, however, that, in either case, his downfall was gratifying to the vindictive old man of the mountain.

None of his bones was broken, nor did the skull seem fractured, as Knowlton ascertained by feeling over his head and his

sinewy frame; and his heart still beat. So, with nothing to do but wait and all night to wait in, they waited. Presently McKay remarked:

"Hope we don't have to fight the poor —— when he comes to life. Think he'll be violent, León?"

"I do not know," the Spaniard answered, slowly. "It is probable. He is a fighter, and he was fighting when he fell, so he may awake fighting. And there is another thing: As I think I told you, his fixed idea is that no white man shall ever see his black face, and that any white man who does so must die. So now— I do not know what he may do. Be sure that he does not snatch one of your pistols."

"Mebbe," suggested Tim, "he'll wake up with his brains shook back in place. He sure took a fierce crack on the dome. And us fellers knowed a guy one time that got his sense back that way. He got a bullet bounced off his bean, and it made him cuckoo; and then we come along and looey, here, crowned him with the butt of a gun. The wallop knocked him cold, but when he come out of it he was sensible as anybody. Begorry, I bet ye this guy——"

"No chance," interrupted Knowlton. "This fellow's mind broke inside, not from an injury to the skull. The only thing that could set him right again would be to remove the cause of the break, and that can't be done. Even if he could be given a new white skin, I doubt if the insanity could be cured now. How long has he been like this, León?"

The Ventuari man thought a minute.

"Eight years," he figured.

"Poor beggar!" muttered McKay.

A long silence ensued. The Americans, in response to León's recent suggestion, hitched their belts around to make the holstered side-arms hang at their backs. All watched the motionless madman with unrelaxing vigilance. Finally León spoke again.

"I think, señores, that my luck is at work once more. You have won your gamble, *Capitán*, and I believe that I shall win mine. Luck will come to us through this man— and his woman. She will not let him lie here long."

"His woman?" questioned McKay.

"Yes. The woman who made him what he is. She follows him wherever he goes, and she can not be far away. More than that, she is the daughter of a Maquiritare chief, and has a will of her own. Unless something has happened to her, she will soon know where her man is, and she will make trouble."

"Good!" exclaimed Knowlton. "But can a woman make any headway against that old highbinder up yonder? He's the big boss around here."

"There's many a better man than him been skidded into the ditch by women," asserted Tim.

"And that's no lie," agreed McKay.

Another long interval of waiting. Except for an occasional deep breath or the slight sounds caused by changes of position, absolute quiet ruled the well of darkness. The stars crept westward unheeded, and moonlight began to silver the western cliff crests. All maintained their vigil beside the vague shape on the clay.

Then León leaned a little forward, and the others tensed. In the upturned dusky face now glimmered two whitish eyes reflecting the sky-shine. They seemed to blink several times, then to remain fixed in a stare.

"*Buen' noche', amigo,*" said León, speaking quietly. "Good evening, friend. You have had a bad fall. Yet perhaps it is not so bad, for by it you have fallen among friends. How do you feel?"

No answer. The eyes held their stare. In them seemed to grow a baleful force, and from the still figure seemed to emanate an impalpable, yet tangible, menace of danger to these men ringing it around. León spoke again, more quickly.

"We all are your friends now, White. It is those men above, that cursed old vulture, who struck you from behind and threw you down here. We are——"

White shot from the ground. Without the slightest discernible preliminary movement he was up—a black specter towering over the still squatting men. His teeth gleamed like those of an attacking jaguar, and the hands uplifted against the stars were curved like huge talons.

With a simultaneous upward and backward spring, his guards leaped away from him, falling instantly into attitudes of defense and counterattack. But the imminent assualt did not come. The black figure, instead of hurling itself on them, staggered; its tense arms and rigid claw-hands sank and reached uncertainly aside

as if grasping for support; through its clenched teeth sounded a hissing gasp. That sudden leap from quiescence to action had caused the dazed brain to whirl with dizziness, and, for the moment, he could hardly maintain equilibrium.

WHILE he wavered helplessly, the voice of McKay came, crisp and incisive.

"Steady, White! Steady! Hold hard! Don't jump us. It would just tickle those sneaks up there to see us fight among ourselves. When we fight we'll fight *them!* You're one of us now. We're all white men together, and we'll stick together. Get me?"

His tone, even more than his words, seemed to exert a stabilizing influence. Though commanding and compelling, it was neither harsh nor imperious. Nor, on the other hand, was it patronizing. It was the direct, man-to-man tone he might have used toward any of his own comrades, and fraught with straightforward sincerity. White's response to it was visible. He ceased to sway and grope, standing steadily, though warily, and peering hard at the tall, gaunt man whose build was not unlike his own.

"I said some rotten things to you this morning, White," the Scot continued. "I take them all back. You're as good a man as any of us. I'd like to shake hands with you."

The blackened man stood motionless. Through the dimness each in turn felt his piercing gaze. He extended no hand of fellowship; rather, he poised as if alert for some indication of a trick concealed behind the amicable words; and McKay himself made no motion to put his proffer into effect, sensing that any such move might be misinterpreted. Words, in this case, were likely to be more potent than deeds.

Then, in a twinkling, the boring eyes left them and darted to the cliff. For a few seconds the twisted mentality appeared to concentrate on the vague shape of the awning. Suddenly White exploded into volcanic rage.

Searing curses, blasting oaths, and hissing threats erupted from him in a sulfurous stream of jungle-Spanish and Indian. Death, plain, ordinary death, was the least of his frenetic promises, to some one up there. Mutilation, mangling, and dismemberment while still alive, and devouring of the victim's flesh and gnawing of his bones by vulture and wild dog afterward, were predicted with a virulence which chilled even his fellow captives.

Nor was his enmity confined to that nameless person alone. The whole race of the *blondos* should be exterminated, to the smallest babe; their settlement should be destroyed, and their name made a mock throughout the land of Guayana. When Black White and his men finished with them, he swore, they would be nothing but splintered bones and a stench.

His fury was truly that of a maniac. Yet the listening quintet felt that it was not mere paranoic frenzy; that the blood-curdling threats were not mere empty vaporings. Behind the venomous words they sensed a deadly purpose based on actual power to fulfill each and every one of those frightful promises. Too, they caught instantly at the reference to his men —his *guerreros*, as he called them—his fighters. León nodded, and his teeth glimmered through the dimness.

When the eruption ceased, as abruptly as it had begun, a silence ensued. No sneering answer dropped from the cliff. Apparently the hearers of that tirade had found in it food for thought. Presently León spoke in an easy conversational manner.

"Where is your gang now, White? I heard that it had left you."

The dark shape faced about, fronting the questioner with a baleful glare.

"Huh?" it hoarsely demanded. "Where'd you hear that?"

"The word came down the Ventuari some time ago, friend. My Maquiritares, you know, hear of such things. You had a fight with your men. Is it not so?"

A harsh, mirthless chuckle. Then——

"Sure I did. Fool of a Gaspar—know him?—got a swelled head and talked back. I beat him up—fists. Hit him too hard. Died. Rest of 'em got sore and quit me. But they came back after awhile. Sent 'em to British Guiana to get more cartridges. Been gone more than a moon. And what they'll do to these——"

More blistering epithets in venomous Spanish, terminating in an inarticulate yell.

"Steady, White!' repeated McKay. "How soon do you expect your men?"

"Huh? Men? Whenever they get here!

Tomorrow—next week—a fortnight—how do I know? Huh!"

"I see. And how are we to live in the meantime? We're starving."

"Don't know. They'll give you *yucut' 'sehi* if you'll eat it—ya ha ha ha! Otherwise——"

"White!" broke in León. "Where is your woman Juana?"

"Huh? Juana? Outside. At the houses."

"*Bueno!* Then she will soon learn of this matter. That is good. And where are your rifles?"

"Rifles. Rifles. Up in cave. No good. Huh huh huh! I unloaded 'em. Hid cartridges. Skunks can't use 'em. Yuh huh huh huh huh!" A hoarse chuckle. "They don't know it yet."

"Good. But there is no way out of here?"

"Out? No, you fool! Don't you know it yet?"

Another pause. Then Knowlton remarked:

"Well, then I guess we might as well bed down for the night. Maybe tomorrow will bring developments. Come on, White. We'll have a smoke-talk — all good fellows together; then sleep awhile."

HE MOVED casually away. As he did so, however, he hitched his pistol around in front of him beyond reach of any sudden snatch from behind. Perhaps the wary White, who seemed to be cat-eyed, saw and misunderstood the motion. Perhaps, instead, it was the suggestion of a smoke-talk that aroused his distrust; for smoking inevitably involved the lighting of matches and the showing of his face, which he believed to be still unseen. At any rate, he made a swift leap and bounded away into the dark.

"Yah! Smart!" he jeered. "Smoke with Death! Sleep with Death! Keep away from me! Or I'll kill the whole pack of you with bare hands!"

His voice had turned savage. For a moment the others stood, staring at the enshrouding shadows among which he had vanished. Then Knowlton answered:

"Oh, very well. Just as you like, old chap. Good night."

No reply. They moved quietly to a smooth mound and lay down, lost to his sight as he was lost to theirs.

"What's that gang of his, León?" quizzed McKay. "And what was that about British Guiana?"

"They are Maquiritares, Capitán; a small band of them—but wicked fighters. He has armed them and trained them in the use of long rifles of thirty caliber. I have

heard that the guns came from British Guiana, at the Rio Cuyuni, in the gold-fields; and the cartridges still come from that place. The Indians go there with bags of gold and trade it to certain men.

"Where they get that gold I do not know, for I never have learned of any in this Ventuari-Caura region; perhaps they dig it on the Rio Caroní, farther to the east. I have heard that some of the gold-hunters in British Guiana tried to follow those Indians and find their treasure-pocket, and that none of those men ever was seen again. Black White's *guerreros* are not good men to monkey with."

"Nor White neither, I'll say," added Tim. "That guy's one hard gorilla. Did ye git what he said about killin' one o' them lads with his fists? And them tough eggs let him git away with it, and come back to him again. Nut or no nut, he ain't nobody's fool, if he can handle a gang like that. Mebbe he's bringin' us luck, but the farther off he keeps tonight the better I'm goin' to sleep."

Wherewith he unholstered his pistol and slid it well down under his waistband, whence no stealthy black hand could extract it without discovery. Knowlton and McKay followed his example. Thereafter all lay listening, thinking, conjecturing, until at length they dozed into fitful slumber shot with weird dreams.

It was Knowlton who had the most vivid nightmare of all. For no reason as yet apparent, he was queerly hot in the increasing coolness of the night; and now, drifting in a strange land of phantasms,

he found himself lying on hard-baked clay whence radiated fearful heat. He could not rise. Above, circling nearer, wheeled a gaunt vulture with a wrinkled human face. All at once it dived to a squat on his body, where it tore at his stomach with long finger-like talons.

And then, from nowhere, a dingy black hand darted to clutch the hideous man-bird by the throat. It lifted and whirled the creature in air, wringing its neck until the head parted from the body. That body ran about, fluttering and tumbling, until at last it stretched out and lay still. The black hand threw the head into a pit. And there that head stood up and stumped about on its neck, squawking horribly upward at the watching man, who now had risen high above it. And that head, that squawking voice, were that of the old man of the mountain.

The dreamer started awake; stared around; sank back. The moon now lighted up the whole western wall. He still was hot. His head ached. Otherwise all was as before. Dimness, silence, stark walls towering to the sky: that was all. Black White was lost in the night; so was the old vulture of the rock. Nothing was real, save gnawing hunger and throbbing head. So he turned over and dozed again—unknowing that, amid these grim realities and unrealities, a dream was to prove a prophecy.

CHAPTER XXIII

VENGEANCE

IN THE dank chill of daybreak the five shivered awake, sat up, and once more gazed around them. Of the latest addition to their wretched company nothing was to be seen. From force of habit, their eyes went then to the mocking hole in the cliff, and saw nothing there either. Last, they looked sidewise at one another—and speedily looked away again.

Hollow-cheeked, sunken-eyed, drawn of mouth and lined of face, gray-white under their tan, they were showing plainly the ravages of hunger and exposure. They had been thin when they arrived here from the savanna; now they were emaciated. As they essayed to make the morning cigarets their fingers shook from combined cold and weakness; and when they succeeded in lighting the brown rolls they found no satisfaction in them. Doggedly they smoked them through. As they finished, Tim gagged.

"Wah! Tobaccer's rotten!" he growled.

The others said nothing. They felt the same way; but all knew that the trouble was not with the tobacco but with their maltreated stomachs.

"That water that we drank last night" mused León.

"Shut up!" Knowlton grimaced as if sickened by the memory.

The Spaniard looked oddly at him, then glanced away without reply. The blond American's eyes were unnaturally bright.

Portonio dragged himself stiffly to his feet, stood on the crest of the mound, and surveyed the entire dungeon; then sank listlessly back.

"*Nada*," he vouchsafed. "Nothing."

To all minds came the same thought, to be dismissed unspoken. Had White, in the dark, fallen or thrown himself down the sink-hole to death in the subterranean stream? Not likely. He must know this place; and, had he been of suicidal bent, he would have destroyed himself years ago. There was no sense in expending energy to hunt for him.

"How's luck, León?" queried McKay, with the ghost of a smile.

"Good. We still live."

"Attaboy!" approved Tim, with an assumption of cheerfulness. "What's more, I got a good healthy appetite. Guess I'll have some ham and eggs, and then a deep-dish apple pie——"

"Shut up!"

So sharp was Knowlton's command this time that all started. McKay studied him with a frown of concern. Tim's eyes widened a trifle as he discerned that glassiness of the blue irises. Portonio and León exchanged significant glances. Not another word was spoken. They who had been five yesterday, and six last night, now were seven; and the name of the invisible seventh was Fever.

Presently the blond American lay back, one arm across his eyes, visible shivers running through his body. The faces of the others grew a shade more grim. Tim's erstwhile florid countenance began to redden again, this time with a boiling rage; and his fixed glare at the palm hood left no doubt as to the object of his wrath.

His right hand slid to the butt of his gun, and stayed there. His intention was plain: If that old vulture came into view, to shoot him down in vengeance. The angle was fair, the distance not impossible, the air clear. And none made any effort to dissuade him from retribution.

A couple of hours passed. The sunlight reached the base of the western cliff. Still the five remained as they were, and still no sign of either Black White or the mountain people had come. Knowlton had ceased to twitch, but now lay with both arms wrapped over his head. Tim had not once relaxed from his vengeful readiness.

Suddenly a hoarse grunt broke from him. His gun hand jerked out and up; his knees rose; his elbows settled on them, and the barrel of the .45 froze into aim. At the orifice which he had watched so long was visible a human figure.

But the hovering hammer of death did not fall. With finger already tightening in the trigger-pull that would have released it, Tim held his fire. More figures had sprung into view up above, and the first one was waving its arms and calling out. In an instant the cries were taken up by the others. Gesticulating, yelling, jostling one another, those crowding shapes poured out a flood of shouts—words incomprehensible to the white men, yet instinct with excitement and alarm.

The prisoners stared, various conjectures leaping to their minds. Tim, still holding his rigid pose, was first to speak.

"White's gorillas! They've got here!"

"No!" contradicted McKay. "That first one's a woman—darker than the rest. It's his woman! She's kicked up a row!"

León, listening intently, disagreed with both. With a quick movement he was up, his face alight.

"The luck of Loco León!" he crowed. "Guaharibos! The place is attacked by the Guaharibos!"

And now, in the babel of vocal noises, the rest could distinguish that word repeated:

"Guaharibos! Guaharibos!"

A DREAD name was that, signifying merciless slaughter and rapine; yet one which caused the hard faces of the listeners to crack in grins—for in this exigency to their captors they scented liberation for themselves. Automatically their minds darted to their rifles up in the cavern; and instantly followed the remembrance of Black White's statement that he had removed and hidden the cartridges. Loaded, those weapons might save the blond people from extermination. Now they were useless.

Tim's gun hand dropped, jamming the side-arm into its holster as he got to his feet. The others, too, hastily shoved themselves erect. With answering shouts they started for the slide. And now, from a point some distance away at the base of the wall, broke fierce yells louder than their own. Bounding like a deer, a sinewy black figure came racing over the swells of the undulating clay, howling commands as it sped.

All the frightful vengeance which he had vowed last night, all his deep-rooted aversion to allowing his face to be seen by white men, all else in his mind, seemingly had been knocked from the blackened man's memory by this abrupt crisis. He dashed toward the acclivity as if determined to hurl himself up it by his own momentum and attack the savage marauders with fists, feet, and teeth. And such was the speed and power of his stride that, although his starting point was much farther away, he reached the goal almost as his fellow-prisoners halted there.

Roaring, he demanded a rope. And, after a confused commotion at the top of the incline, a rope appeared. In the brief interim the five starvelings, keyed up by the sudden prospect of deliverance, stood tense and ready, shooting comprehensive glances at him and at the crowd above.

For the first time they saw Black White in the clear light of day—the first white men who ever thus scanned him, and the last. And they saw a face and body which now revealed the torture of his cankered mind. Into the sooty visage were graven deep furrows, harsh as the seams of the stark rock walls; a gash-like scowl, and myriad lines at eyes and nose—the scars eaten into the flesh by the acid of bitterness.

Nor were these the only marks. Face, chest, and arms were disfigured by long parallel cicatrices; old scars which looked as if inflicted by slashing blunt claws—or finger-nails—and which suggested that in some frenzy the madman had attempted to tear away his hated skin.

These things they noted in a flash. Too, they observed with a faint surprize that, though hair and beard were black, his eyes were a gray-blue. Those Celtic eyes now were ablaze with an uncanny greenish flame, and behind down-curved lips his teeth gleamed like the fangs of an infuriated jaguar. And the voice with which he spat orders and abuse at the people of the cave was ferocious as the coughing snarl of that deadly beast of prey.

Above, seconding his commands with sharp tones and active motions, the woman who had first appeared was hurrying the outward movement of the rope; a short, but strongly built and shapely woman of Maquiritare type—light-skinned, dark-eyed, deep-chested and firm-breasted, intelligent and decidedly comely, and adorned with an ornate bead apron The others all were blonds, boys and women, who fumbled in confusion, as if their shallow wits were benumbed by panic. They tangled the rope among themselves, fell over it, and babbled senseless retorts to the tongue-lashing of the woman Juana. But for her incisive upbraidings and actual physical assaults, they might have abandoned the simple task and gone to milling aimlessly and uselessly around the rock rooms.

Then, by jerks, the rope began to descend. As it snaked slowly down the slope in response to the maneuvering of Juana, McKay turned sharply on White.

"You'll go up last!" he asserted.

If the other heard, he gave no sign. His domineering yells continued without a break. Nearer squirmed the line, nearer, until it came within reach. Then all six made a dive for it.

"Up!" snapped McKay. "Every man for himself! You, White! Take your turn —last! Back up!"

"Get going, you fool!" snarled White. "Climb! Climb, you old woman—shut up—I'll tear your face off! Blood! Blood! Guaharibos to ——"

They climbed, with his savage mouthings in their ears. Knowlton, Tim, Portonio, León, McKay—just as they had happened to grab the rope, they clambered up, slipping, floundering, panting, hauling with the strength of desperation, while White raved and bullied and swore as if at his own warriors, and the people above strained back to counterbalance their weight. There were no stops for breath. It was a mad pull upward with the last energy of weakened bodies—a fierce scramble with teeth set, faces contorted, and hands reaching and closing in grips tenacious as those of drowning men. At last, disheveled and streaming with sweat, they cleared that slimy slope—only to lean exhausted against the twenty-foot wall of sheer stone which still blocked them.

"Make—loop," panted McKay. "Got to lift us—one at a time. Tim—you first."

Throwing a rough loop in the line, Tim got a foot in it and grasped the upper rope with both hands. The others clung like flies to projections on the stone, maintaining their footing on the treacherous dirt while the cable swung free. White volleyed more commands. Tim rose in air, scraped along the rock face, clutched the edge, and scrambled inward.

"Awright!" boomed his voice. "Send up looey! Lower away there, ye squallin' idjuts—*arrio el cabo!*"

Again the rope descended. And again White, for all his cursing and gnashing, stood and let another go up before him. It was Knowlton who went, and White's fierce gaze followed him as if anxious lest he fall. The fevered man did sway dizzily, but held his grip until Tim's fists shot forth and yanked him bodily up over the brink. Then the others ascended in rapid succession—White last.

But if the queer, half-savage black-white man had controlled himself for the moment, he flung aside restraint the instant he was out of his prison. The lethal rage with which he had sworn retribution last night flamed again as he confronted the perfidious blonds.

With a frothing yell he sprang at them, striking, kicking, tearing at woman and boy alike. Screams of terror and pain shrilled in the place. A confused, stumbling rush, and they fled from him in a worse panic than that which had driven them to rescue him. In a few seconds only his own woman, Juana, remained. The rest had bolted into the larger cave and thence into the tunnel.

JUANA, viewing his attack with utmost coolness, now called to him sharply, pointing toward a shadowy recess near the juncture of the two rooms. He wheeled, rasping something in reply; then, as she still pointed, voiced a ferine

yell and bounded into that narrow alcove. He vanished. From somewhere beyond sounded a croaking voice of mingled rage and fear.

"Ah!" ejaculated León. "The nest of the vulture!"

With dragging steps he shambled toward the fold in the stone, his mates pressing after. Juana herself followed, a coldly vengeful light playing across her brown eyes. They found the shadowy indentation to be really a curving entrance to a third cave-room—a small one, dim-lit by a little jagged aperture opening toward the day. And in it, as the Spaniard had guessed, the old demon of the demon-mountain was at bay.

Bolt upright against the farther wall he stood, his dingy mantle thrown aside, his gaunt body, mere bones and tendons, standing out white as a skeleton against the dark stone; naked and repulsive, gripping a naked and menacing machete. At sight of the doomed men who had risen from their dungeon to confront him he hissed like a snake. And at sight of him, Black White's growlings died in his throat. In ominous silence he slipped forward, quivering with concentrated ferocity and fury.

Curtly, composedly, Juana spoke in Spanish, her words loud in the tense quiet.

"He fought us when we came. I pushed his head against the stone. He fell and was like dead. But he lives again. He has lived too long. Kill him. Kill him dead."

With amazing quickness the ancient malefactor stabbed.

The long knife licked out like a striking serpent. But White leaped with the blurring speed of a jungle-cat. A sidewise twist—a pounce—an impact of flesh on flesh—a hissing gasp—a crunching crack, as of bones breaking—a low, hideous moan. The machete dropped. The bony frame crumpled up.

The predacious face, its eyes bulging, seemed to bloat, and its tongue ran out. Then it blurred in a rapid back-and-forward movement, shaken in the throat-crushing grasp of the madman; and at each backward heave the bald head battered against the rock. Within ten seconds there could be no question that Juana's demand had been fulfilled. The hairless skull was shattered.

But White's lust for revenge was not so easily appeased. Still holding his terrific grip on the skinny throat, he thrashed the whole body against wall and floor, swinging it in air, pounding it down with frightful impacts, crashing it about until hardly a whole bone could have remained.

"Arrrh! Arrrh!" he growled, his voice rasping gloatingly through clenched teeth, his eyes shining with an infernal light. "Arrrh! Arrrh!"

And at last, holding the crimson ruin aloft before him, he stalked out through the entrance. Knowlton, staring and staggering, followed—and saw his recent nightmare enacted to the finish. White strode to the verge and, with a final burst of violence, swung the dead vulture around him and heaved it far out into the void.

Save for the facts that the head still adhered limply to the torso and that it could not squawk from the pit, the blond Northerner's dream had come true. Now his fevered fancy somehow found the idea humorous; and, leaning against the wall, he began hysterically to laugh. At the sound, the bloodstained black man spun about, his face still contorted. For a second or two he stared. Then he, too, suddenly burst into yells of mirth.

The caves rang with the awful cachinnations of the two—a madman and a man half mad.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RAIDERS

WITHIN the vulture's nest, the two Northerners and the two Southerners looked at one another and at the woman. That woman looked back at them calmly, a slight smile of ruthless satisfaction playing on her lips. With a slow tilt of the head, she said:

"There are food and water."

The simple words loosed ravenous hounds of desire. At another time, the thought of eating in this red-spattered death-chamber might have aroused only disgust; but now these men were too far gone to be squeamish. Avidly they scanned the room; and on the floor they spied meat, fruit, jars, and gourds. Down one wall, too, ran a silent trickle of fresh water, vanishing into a crack in the floor—the owner's unfailing spring, which had made this hole habitable for him.

"Merry!" barked McKay. "Grub! Water! Come and get it!"

The yammering hilarity outside ceased. They surged at the food, finding the meat to be a partly eaten quarter of smoked wild hog, the fruit lechosa melons and small bananas, and the contents of a wide-mouthed jar to be manioc.

Another clay vessel, of bottle shape, held clear, cool water taken from the vertical rivulet. This they attacked first, McKay and León drinking from gourds and Tim from the bottle, Portonio meanwhile striding to the wall and sucking noisily at the steady little stream. Knowlton, weaving in at the entrance, voiced a hoarse cry as he saw what they were doing and threw himself forward, snatching at the gourd which McKay extended.

Without words, all sank beside the food, slashing off meat with their knives, wolfing down fruit, or washing half-chewed manioc down with new draughts of the wondrously cool water. Then in their ears jarred the tones of Black White.

"Hurry up! Guaharibos outside! Got to kill 'em! Blow 'em to ——! Tear 'em! Gut 'em! Blood! Yah! Come on!"

"Aw, to the —— with 'em—and everybody else!" rumbled Tim. "We don't care if they massacree the whole layout. We're eatin'!"

"You said something," averred McKay. "But where are our guns, White? Not here."

White glowered; snapped something at Juana; got a reply; snarled oaths.

"Fools took 'em out!" he grated. "Down at entrance. Come on! I'll get cartridges. Know where they are. Hah! Yah-ha-ha-ha! Fooled 'em all! But shake a leg!"

"Go on and lick the world yourself," mumbled Knowlton through a mouthful of meat. "We're comfortable. Ha ha ha ha!" He began to laugh again.

The delirious timbre of that mirth held White motionless a minute, but he did not echo it. Instead, he leaned forward menacingly, rage reviving in his glaring eyes. Then he spun about and leaped away through the passage.

"White men! White hogs!" he sneered venomously. "Women and children dying —white men eat! Yah! *I'll* fight—Black White'll fight! And then I'll fight *you*, you yellow ——"

His raucous voice died away toward the tunnel. Every jaw stopped, and eye met eye. Juana disappeared, following her man.

"Begorry, who's loony now?" muttered Tim. "Black gorilla turns white—crazy cuckoo's got sense—and us guys are yeller! Women and kids— Umph! He's right, at that. But they can run up the tunnel if they've got to—bring our guns back, too. And I'm goin' to fill me tank before I start anywheres. I'm clean out o' gas and me self-starter's broke."

And he resumed cramming. So did the rest. If possible, however, they ate faster than before. Those parting words, though spoken by a crazed killer—who himself had violently attacked women and boys a few minutes ago—had stung.

They devoured everything edible in sight. Then they inspected another jar, a large one topped with leaves. From it, as Portonio tilted it, ran a red trickle which evoked growls and scowls. Tim kicked it against the wall. From its shattered fragments gushed a flood of the infernal *sehi* drink—prepared against the time when they should be so maddened by sun and suffering that they might drink it and so fulfill the malevolent old scoundrel's inexorable purpose.

A cold, destructive rage seized them. Other clay vessels lay about, and they smashed them all. From them tumbled uncanny things—dried spiders, mummified bats, snakeskins, unknown herbs, a green powder of pungently disagreeable smell, a mess of black paste. They kicked these things about and stamped on them. Not until every pot and jar was reduced to fragments and its contents smeared into nothingness did they turn to leave the place.

And then, as they were going, León spied one more receptacle: A clay ball, nestling in a niche above. He yanked it forth—and found it sealed and heavy. Nowhere was any opening. But, as he turned it in his hands, within it rattled something hard.

He slammed it down. It flew apart, and from it rolled scores of large, dark pebbles.

"More junk!" Tim grunted scornfully. "Come on. Let's quit this dump."

But León and McKay both stooped and picked up several stones. While the Spaniard peered curiously at his, the captain started and held one to the light.

"Well—I'll—be—" he muttered. Then, in a vibrant drawl: "Yes, junk, Tim! Junk worth about five thousand a stone! Emeralds! The biggest I ever saw!"

"Huh—what? Emeralds! Cripes! Them things are worth more'n diamonds!"

"Exactly. This mess of junk will come to a good half-million dollars—maybe more."

"Jumpin' Judas!"

They stared at one another for dazzled minutes; then fell feverishly to picking up the "junk." As they straightened again the Spaniard gave a happy little chuckle.

"Señores," he laughed, "I was born in the month of May, and the emerald is my birthstone. Do you now begin to believe in the luck of Loco León?"

"Lucky Loco León," echoed Knowlton, pressing a hand to his swimming head. "You'll be luckier—if you keep 'em long enough to cash 'em in. I'd trade the lot for a stiff shot of quinine."

His words and his self-evident sickness dashed the jubilation of his comrades. Precious though these stones might be in the marts of civilization, here they were worthless.

"Buck up!" admonished McKay. "We're starting out right away. You've got to stick it till we can get through to the Ventuari."

"And that ain't so soft, neither," reminded Tim, "with a bunch o' howlin' —— to walk through before we git started. The sooner we git onto the firin' line and do our stuff the better chance we've got, I'm thinkin'."

McKay nodded, but swiftly searched the chamber for something which could be used as a jewel-bag. Their rucksacks were gone. On the floor, however, lay the dingy cotton robe of the dead owner of the place. A few quick folds converted it into a reasonably strong little sack, into which the green treasure was tumbled; and cords cut from a near-by hammock tied it securely. Then, picking up a couple of machetes, the only weapons to be found, they marched out.

THE outer caverns were vacant. Near the tunnel they found stubby torches, one of which they lighted. Once more they glanced around. Then they filed away into the long passageway, a bit sluggish from their feeding, yet with strength magically renewed; resurrected dead men who once more had become alive and formidable, faring forward to fight, leaving behind the smashed hulk which had been the warlock of the weird mountain, and bearing with them in that wizard's robe a fortune.

Not until they had passed beyond the long stairway did they hear any sound save their own footsteps; and not until they came into the outer cave did they see any one. Before arriving there, however, they made out an irregular cracking of gunshots, so dull and intermittent as to indicate that they were fired from a point outside by one man.

Involuntarily they pressed on faster, hitching higher the heavy cartridge-belts to which they had clung through all vicissitudes, loosening the pistols which once more swayed in the holsters, or tightening their grips on the machetes—these last forming the sole offensive armament of the Spanish pair until they could regain their repeaters and so put into play the contents of their bullet-bags.

Entering the larger space where the day-shine gave light, they found a small bevy of women and children huddling against one wall. As these refugees spied the white men advancing in the glow of their low-burned torch they voiced a moaning whimper, and their staring eyes glistened with animal fear. A few pointed urgently outward. The rest simply gaped and quaked. Among them were no men. The males of the tribe evidently were outside, warring against the savage assailants from the southern jungles.

Dropping the torch, the five loped to the threshold. As they did so, the ragged firing ceased. Between the guardian rocks outside now became visible blond men, armed with bows, falling back toward their last defense—the gloom of the cave itself.

Following the cessation of the rifle-shots came impacts and splintering sounds on the stones beyond—the thuds of enemy arrows. A few whole shafts rattled in ricochet off the natural bulwarks and dropped at the entrance. And now the semisilence gave way to a rising wave of noise. Beyond and below, savage voices swelled into a dissonant chorus of hateful triumph.

In answer, a nearer voice howled defiance. Up on the crest of the tallest stone, where he had sniped the enemy until the cartridges failed, Black White hurled a stream of vocal vituperation and gesticular insults at the attacking horde. Arrows flitted around him and cracked viciously on the rock below him, and the increasing fury of the yells beyond proved how his taunts stung. With a final gesture of peculiarly primitive contempt, he ducked and came scrambling down the inner slope of his parapet.

"Yah! Hah!" he howled, as his flaming gaze struck the emerging white men. "War! Blood and guts! Load up and shoot! Plug 'em in the belly! Rip 'em——"

"Guns!" thundered McKay. "Where are the guns? Guns!"

"Guns. Guns. Here, fools, here!" He stooped and arose, a rifle in each hand. Now they saw the other weapons on the ground, where he had thrown them backward one by one as he emptied the magazines. With a rush they snatched the pair he held and pounced on the others. Rapidly they reloaded—the ex-soldiers jamming .30 clips into the open tops of their military-model arms, the Venezuelans thumbing .44 slugs into the side gates of their old-type repeaters. White himself demanded, and received, .30's for his own piece, a short but thick-breeched sporting gun. He got one magazineful, and no more.

Meanwhile the bowmen, their own arrows spent, picked up the few enemy shafts which had dropped inside and held them ready on taut cords.

IN THE brief time taken for the reloading, the ferocious mob-clamor mounted nearer. With the self-evident exhaustion of ammunition and retreat of the defenders, the wild men were charging from the tree-belt below the cave, closing in to revel in a carnival of butchery.

Between the blonds and extinction intervened only the battery of their late prisoners; for, retreat into the bowels of the mountain though they might, their enemies could follow; and even if they should wreck the ladders of ascent and thus block further pursuit, the Guaharibos could exterminate them ultimately by a counter-blockade, since within this barren rock-hole now remained no food.

There could be little doubt that these savages, whom neither the awesome echoes of the Talking Mountain nor the bullets of Black White could turn back, would carry their siege through to the finish. So the defenders must make their fight short, sharp, and decisive.

"Lie low!" snapped McKay, his expert eye swiftly sizing up the surroundings, then sharply scrutinizing Knowlton, who, once more armed and facing battle, now was temporarily steady and sure-motioned. "Merry! You and Tim—right flank! León, Portonio—left flank! White—you and I hold the center! Hug the ground, hold your fire till I shoot! Then pour it into 'em! Let's go!"

Less than a minute had passed since they had emerged from the shadows; and not another second was lost. The two little flank divisions sprang for their stations to right and left of the high stones, whence they could rake the ravine of approach with oblique cross-fires. White, who had become suddenly silent and seemed waiting to learn the captain's disposal of his forces, showed his teeth in a down-curved grin and nodded violently; then, still noiseless, glided beside the Scot to the bowlder-bound spot whence the bowmen had retreated.

As the two queerly mated tall men stole around the angles of the path they nearly stumbled over a couple of bodies—blond Indians struck down by plunging arrows, now lying stark and still. A moment later they were crouching in ambush at the side of a rock and peering down at the oncoming killers from the Orinoco.

Loping up the hollow which once had been a watercourse came a brown horde led by a huge, hideous embodiment of abysmal savagery; a primitive Samson with enormous shoulders, colossal arms and legs, bushy black hair hanging in an unkempt mop, great teeth bared in a cruel mouth whence poured jarring howls of exultation.

In his flat chocolate face glinted beady eyes ruthless as those of a crocodile. From his pierced lower lip dangled a jaguar-tooth, and around his thick neck flapped a collar of peccary tusks. Otherwise he was stark naked, as were all his followers. His brawny right fist clutched a great hardwood stabbing-spear, which he brandished aloft as he strode. He looked to be not only a savage murderer, but a cannibal; worse still, a cannibal who would devour his man-meat raw.

Nor were those behind him a whit less bestial in appearance. Although none equaled the chief in physique, the crowding bodies were hard and muscular, the lowering visages brutish, the fanged mouths inhuman as those of carnivorous beasts. Spears, bludgeons, stone axes, bows and arrows bristled above them as they came charging on to the grapple, and from every throat roared malevolent joy at the prospect of a saturnalia of murder. In numbers they might be about fourscore. In ferocity they were a legion.

Already they had covered half the distance from the trees, and now they were a scant hundred yards distant. Their triumphant bawls, their evil expressions, proved too much for the madman lurking beside McKay. Before the captain was quite ready to give the signal shot, Black White leaped forth to face the whole horde, giving them back howl for howl.

McKay swore and slid his gun forward. For a second or two longer, however, he remained unseen. Every savage eye had centered on the black semisavage confronting them—the lone gunman whom they had driven from his perch, and who now seemed about to assail them with gun empty.

The face of the chief stretched in a malignant grimace. With sinister suggestiveness he swept his free hand to his mouth, snapped his strong teeth repeatedly as if chewing, and then slapped his belly.

He bounded forward with fiercer speed, swinging his spear-hand higher and farther back. Suddenly, in midstride, he caved at the middle as from a violent blow. His foot came down uncertainly. For a second he wavered, a look of vast astonishment wiping out his grin. Then his spear dropped; his hands streaked to his midriff; and he plunged headlong, writhing and kicking in mortal agony.

White had thrown up his rifle and shot. With a vindictive screech, he now fired again and again into the brown mass. McKay took quick sight and went into action behind him. And from beyond the flanking stone at the right broke other gunshots and a stentorian roar worse than that of any Guaharibo.

"Yippy-yeeow!" blared Tim Ryan. "Give 'em ——!"

CHAPTER XXV

WAR

A THUDDING roll of gunfire drummed a tattoo of death. A slashing storm of lead pounded the vanguard of the brown horde into oblivion. A score of the raiders toppled and fell in a welter of naked corpses and unflung weapons. A thin blue haze rose around the stone sentinels guarding the cave.

Stunned, shocked speechless and witless by this totally unexpected blast of destruction, the Guaharibos halted short and stood wavering, swept by confused and conflicting impulses. Like the savage tiger of their native jungle, which is most deadly when wounded, their first ferocious urge was to spring forward and annihilate their assailants; but through that vortex of crossfire no man could leap. And when, appalled by the continuous mowing down of their front, those facing the vomiting muzzles gave way and turned to retreat to cover, they found themselves blocked by those behind who still sought to surge forward. Thus, shot in breast or back, they fell like stalks before a scythe—until the guns were emptied.

Then, in the hush while desperately working fingers among the rocks crammed fresh cartridges into the hot rifles, the horde swayed forward again. The first hesitant push became a concerted rush. Spears and arrows, hastily loosed, whizzed and clattered among the stones. Hoarse howls of hate rioted in a blood-chilling medley.

The attack was once more under way—a confused, disorderly assault, hampered at first by stumbles over dying men who thrashed and rolled about, but a charge which could not again be stopped by nerve-shock. Bullets alone could blow it back.

Tim and Knowlton, first to refill their magazines, resumed their rapid but accurate rifle duet, planting every bullet with deadly effect. On the other flank, however, and in the center also, silence still held. The side-loading, long-tubed repeaters of the Spanish pair could not be recharged quite so quickly, and their owners were stubbornly, and wisely, withholding their fire until they could again turn loose full guns. In the pocket between the boulders a more serious *contretemps* had come about, and McKay was settling it with drastic directness.

Black White, his piece once more shot out, had bounded back just in time to evade the storm of missiles darting at him. Fiercely he demanded more cartridges. The captain, intensely busy with his own reloading, and withal angered by the other's self-willed action in leaping out too soon, gave him one glare and ignored him. Thereupon the madman, with an answering glare and a snarl, snatched the rifle and strove to wrest it from his grasp.

For a second or two they wrestled. Then

the Scot let go. White, snarling again, staggered back a pace, his infuriated expression indicating as ready a willingness to fight his countryman as a Guaharibo. McKay's gray eyes went bleak, and he acted. His left fist crashed on the bearded chin; his right drove in a terrific uppercut to the corner of the jaw. The blackened man straightened backward—rebounded from a rock—collapsed in a senseless huddle.

McKay caught the rifle from him as he fell. With a grim smile lighting his iron face, he turned his back on the limp form and snapped the gun to his shoulder. An instant later it was kicking back at him in repeated recoils, and brown forms were dropping faster.

Now the big-bored bush-guns at the left began again to belch their blunt slugs, but at slightly longer intervals than before. The foremost Guaharibos no longer came in a compact mass, but strung out irregularly, their pace of advance depending altogether on each man's fleetness and his luck in remaining unhit. So the gunmen must pick them off one by one, shifting aim sharply after every shot, losing time and wasting ammunition, for often two or three bullets, from different rifles, went to the killing of one foe. And, though the leaders kept dropping, other thick-thewed barbarians continued to throw themselves onward and became leaders in turn.

The task of the riflemen was like that of shooting the heads off a hydra, only to find new ones instantly growing. And, despite its continuous decapitation, the body of the hydra kept closing in.

"Hot dog!" gritted Tim, between shots. "Ye got to hand it to these ——, they're game! And they'll git to us yet!"

"Looks like it," conceded Knowlton, expertly drilling another coppery chest. "Have to execute a—" *crack!* "strategic retreat on the hot foot if they—" *crack!* "keep this up. ——! Missed him!"

On the other flank, León was voicing a similar prediction to Portonio as their thundering guns leaped and spat. Although he was shooting coolly, the tenacious onslaught was cutting a frown of perturbation between his slitted eyes.

The hitherto unexcitable river-pilot, on the other hand, was now aglow with a hot lust of battle and agrin with joy over each successful shot, and he answered only with a laughing oath. Each was running true to type—the former looking a little ahead as he fought, the latter living only each minute as it came.

Meanwhile McKay, ripping out his string of shots and downing a man with every one, was as swiftly formulating his next moves. In the face of that determined charge the defenders must give ground as soon as their guns again failed. Moreover, the savages now were spreading out, mounting both sides of the trough, to swing around either flank of the riflemen and, while thus scattering their fire, rush them from all sides. To attempt to retain the present position meant to be overwhelmed. Wherefore, as the last empty shell flew from the ejector, he lost not a second in withdrawing.

Spinning about, he stooped, grabbed Black White, heaved him up across his shoulders; clutched his own gun and the black man's, and loped caveward. He spent no time in ascertaining that the victim of his blows was still insensible—he knew it well enough. When the Scot's fists landed on a man as they had on this one, that man remained dead to the world for a considerable time.

"FALL back!" he thundered. "Close up! To the rear!"

His booming command, though muffled by the surrounding boulders, carried to the outlying flankers, three of whom obeyed at once. The fourth, Portonio, had to be jabbed violently by León's rifle-muzzle before he would give over his shooting; for his long magazine still held a bullet or two. When he did move, however, it was with speed, and three poisoned arrows missed him by inches.

Crossing the small space between stones and cave-mouth, they found the blond Indians thriftily collecting every arrow which had flown over the bulwarks. Of these there were quite a number, loosed so hastily by the attackers that they had darted high. Not one of these had been shot back again; the mountain men had let their erstwhile prisoners do all the fighting. Now those gleaners hastily withdrew and picked up their bows. But, armed again, they showed no inclination to hold the entrance while their allies settled themselves in new positions. Rather, they

watched the gun-fighters in a coldly calculating way, as if estimating their continued utility.

As the white men loped back into shadowy dimness, the blonds retreated with them. Outside an ululating howl foretold that the second stage of the combat would be fiercer than the first. Although half of the Guaharibo force now had been shot down, the rest, aflame with vindictive blood-lust, were converging to maim, mangle, and mutilate their cornered enemies.

"Load!" panted McKay. "And keep loaded! Change the firing combination. León and Knowlton pair up—Tim and Portonio ditto. Gives better continuity of fire. Take the walls, I'll hold the center. Save pistols for the finish. Halt! Far enough—take positions! Here, you! *Aquí!*" This last to one of the biggest blonds. "Take this black one farther in! Hurry!"

The fellow addressed did not obey. He and his mates had stopped with the white men, and now he simply stood and stared at the limp lunatic, then turned his head toward the outer rocks. Either he believed White to be dead or did not care what became of him, dead or alive. But from within now came one who did care—Juana. As McKay dropped his burden she dashed forward, her face set.

"*Muert'?* Dead?" she demanded.

"No." McKay made a vague movement indicating that some flying object had hit her man; then, giving her no further attention, fell to reloading. With surprizing strength she lifted her mad mate and hauled him away, heels dragging and head hanging, into the gloomy interior. White's gun did not go with him. McKay kept it for immediate use.

"What happened to him?" wondered León.

"Bumped his jaw on my knuckles," the Scot tersely explained.

Tim burst into a snort of mirth. Knowlton and León, glimpsing the skinned knuckles of that pile-driver right fist, snickered. No more was said. Every man of them was working fast to refill the guns to the limit. And, before the first Guaharibos came leaping between and around the boulders, every piece again was ready.

Meanwhile the blond men had resumed their noiseless movements toward the rear, carrying with them the collected arrows. Their intention evidently was to let the whites bear the brunt of attack once more, while they themselves saved their shafts for a last emergency. But Portonio spied the movement and blocked it. Jumping before them, he fronted them with gun cocked and mirthless grin—a baring of the teeth more menacing than the gaping muzzle.

There was nothing easy-going about that stalwart fellow now; he was a Venezuelan driving Indians; and the ways of Venezuelans with Indians are drastic. León, too, as he caught the situation, lashed the deserters with a tongue like a whip. Sullenly they faced forward once more, tensing for the inevitable clash.

Then through the little cañon sprang brown brutes, and from the sides bounded others—to fall dead or dying on the threshold. Their own arrows, speeding back at them from the bows of their quarry, struck them down as they came. Bullets from the ready rifles caught those whom the cane shafts missed. Where they had thought to find a brief grapple and quick victory, they met a stronger force than before; a force, too, which their sun-contracted eyes could hardly see in the dimness of the cave.

Moreover, they now were slowed up and divided by the big boulders, among and around which they must sift instead of combining into a cohesive mass. Where a solid rush might have brought them triumph through sheer momentum, they could not make it, for they could not unite. The only unity now possible to them was that of a common fate; at least, so long as that withering blast of missiles poured into them from the thrumming bows of the blue-eyed lost race of Guayana.

However undependable those blond archers might have been heretofore, they now were steady and deadly as veteran troopers. They shot with marvelous speed and precision, and without flurry or waste. Every arrow that hissed forth buried itself in a burly brown body, and that body pitched forward or sidewise and stayed where it struck earth. While their ammunition lasted, they left little for the gunmen to do; and those gunmen, astonished and delighted by their dexterity, let them carry on the war almost unaided while they kept their own weapons full.

Meanwhile, the yells of the Guaharibos became downright demoniac with fury.

Perhaps they recognized their own arrows protruding from the corpses of their stricken comrades; or perhaps they were maddened to find that, having fought their way thus far in the teeth of bullets, they now were being slaughtered contemptuously by mere jungle shafts snapped from strings. At any rate, their strident bass discord rose to an ear-splitting screech worthy of fiends.

ALL at once the arrows were gone. The archers stood with useless bows, yet leaning forward as if about to bound out and finish their fight with bare hands. Possibly they deemed themselves doomed, and, their blood now up, were determined to fall wreaking death with their last clutch. But this was not to be.

Shouts of approval broke from the gun-fighters, and the white men's hands motioned them to the rear. For a second they stood—then bounded away and were gone in the dark. Outside, a grim monument to their prowess, lay a disorderly heap of transfixed raiders who would raid no more.

Now the dull twanging of the bow-cords was replaced by the crash of rifles, and the dimness by lightning-streaks of darting flame. Standing, crouching, or kneeling, according to individual preference, the soldiers of fortune hammered out their rolling drumfire in a final fight against a dwindling mob of veritable maniacs. The faces of the berserkers who now came scrambling over the slain were writhing, slavering visages flecked with froth, and their red eyes were those of mad dogs.

Shot down, they arose again—some of them—and struggled onward until fairly riddled. They threw arrows like javelins. They hurled axes like tomahawks, bludgeons like knobkerries. They sent spears slithering along walls and floor. They dropped and ran on hands and knees to duck under the horizontal hail of lead. They bent every energy, every trick, to the reaching and rending of the men behind those spurting tongues of fire. And, but for the rapidity, intensity, and accuracy of the shooting, they would have battled through to grips.

McKay's new disposal of his little force proved its vital importance in this cyclonic finish. The long-magazined repeaters of León and Portonio held more than double the number of cartridges constituting a full load for the bolt-action arms; so that when Knowlton and Tim had to suspend firing for a few seconds their Spanish partners covered their reloading, and neither flank went dumb.

McKay, kneeling alone, held the center as before, snatching up White's gun when his own was exhausted, and drawing his pistol when both rifles were shot out. To right and left the two North-South combinations battled with a continuity which left not a silent moment in which the storming savages could gain ground.

Before the rifle-fire ceased, Knowlton and Tim had gotten away three full loads, León and Portonio a load and a half, for the Spaniards lacked time to refill their tubes completely on the second round. In those few minutes nearly a hundred bullets flew from those guns. Yet Guaharibos still remained alive—for in such rapid shooting, against such tenacious and active foes, not every shot could kill; some had missed, others had failed to slay on impact. And now came the last of that fierce band.

Half a dozen unwounded savages, backed by as many bleeding but still formidable, plunged over the mound of the fallen and threw themselves at the hated whites.

Pistols roared. Machetes gleamed. Spears hissed. Clubs flew. Brown men flopped and lay still. So did one white man—McKay. Dodging a spear-point, he was stunned by a thrown bludgeon. Shots—snarls—blows—crunch of steel on bone—a scuffle of feet—a whirl and tumble of grappling bodies. Sudden silence.

Tim and Knowlton arose from under dead savages whom they had shot at arm's length but who had borne them down in their dying grapple and fall. León and Portonio, machetes dripping red, stood among three corpses—one of which lay headless, decapitated by the riverman. The last rush was over.

McKay moved slightly; sat up abruptly; stared, got to his feet, blinked and scowled. Then, his words coming jerkily:

"Guess—that'll be — about all."

"Plenty for one mornin'," opined Tim. "Feelin' O. K.?"

"Uh-huh."

They peered around, still tense for action. Nothing alive, except themselves, stood upright. The cave was dim with smoke, reeking with powder-gas. From

their feet to the threshold stretched a litter of dead, rising beyond to a brown hillock splashed with red. At the rear, where the blonds had disappeared, nothing now was visible. They seemed alone in a slaughter-pen.

"*Aqui, amigos!*" called León.

From the darkness came no reply, no shuffle of feet, no sound even of breathing. Men, women, children, the senseless Black White and the Maquiritare girl who, long years ago, had broken his brain—all had departed into the recesses of the mountains.

The gaunt, unkempt band of fighters looked at one another and out at the blazing sunlight. With one accord they picked up their rifles; reloaded; searchingly scanned the human débris before them, detecting no movement; and lifted their eyes once more to a patch of far blue sky between the outer boulders. McKay strode forward and lifted from the shadow at the foot of one wall—where he had thrown it just before going into action—the sack of green loot.

"Fall in!" quoth he. "March!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OUT TRAIL

HIGH in the limitless blue, so high as to be virtually invisible to any earth-bound creature, floated a king vulture. Circling, veering, planing easily on the upper breezes, he drifted gradually northwestward, his far-sighted eyes fixed in a ceaseless downward stare. Whence he had come only the bodiless gods of Guayana knew. But his rapacious bare head, his merciless watch, were remarkably like those of a human hawk which for decades had ruled this land, and which now lay smashed at the bottom of a rockbound abyss.

To the long-range vision of the air-king the rim of that mountain gulf was visible—though, perhaps, dimly—leagues away to the southeast. Far more plain was the mountain itself, a brute bulk squatting on the edge of a great yellow rhomboid dotted with stumpy trees.

Yet the hovering ghoul had no interest in that place, even though it had recently been the scene of such events as should prove most interesting to one of his class. Nor was he contemplating the great green carpet of jungle surrounding that barren expanse of yellow, nor thirstily eying a narrow stream winding northward a little way beyond the southern juncture of desert and forest.

As for many hours past, his tireless attention was riveted on five dots creeping slowly, wearily along the surface of the heat-parched waste. One of those dots staggered and stumbled. Now and then it fell.

Four days ago those puny little figures had emerged from a hole at the base of that distant mountain. Down a slope strewn with many other man-shapes—brown ones, huddled or sprawled, and utterly still—they had gone, and into the belt of woods. There, after some search, they had found a path leading to the deserted habitations of yellow-haired people who now were hidden in the rock; a number of clay-walled, cone-roofed houses around an unfailing spring, among which lay several dead men, blond and brown.

At these houses they had collected their stolen helmets and sombreroes and hammocks and rucksacks; crammed the pack-bags with such food as they could carry; filled two large calabash water-bottles and slung them on the backs of the two tallest—a hard-faced Scot and a brawny Venezuelan. Then they had climbed to the region of stunted trees and begun a dogged march to the northwest.

They did not know that in trekking northwestward they were following the longest diagonal across the natural quadrilateral, and thus taking fullest advantage of the comparatively open ground where they could make best progress. They did know, however—at least, one blue-eyed Spaniard knew—that somewhere in that direction should lie a certain Caño Tamara, and that the Tamara reached the Ventuari just below the *raudal* of Monoblanco, in fair proximity to their cache.

This, then, was by far their best route. The road by which they had come in—the weird Periqueta—they had no desire to travel again; it was more roundabout, it had neither inhabitants nor canoes, and, by no means least, it was the way by which certain people behind them would expect them to return.

After their experience with the ability of those people to become ghosts which snatched four strong Maquiritares and a canoe without a sound, they had no desire to sleep where those ghosts could as easily

slip up by night and stab all to death in a twinkling. And they had little doubt that some such action might be projected. The passport which had brought them into this land had literally expired; expired violently in the hands of a maniac. And as for gratitude for saving those cold-blooded blonds from becoming true ghosts—it might as well be expected from snakes.

Nor was their judgment a whit too harsh. Some time after they had vanished among the ghost-trees, leaving no tracks on the baked ground, the hole in the mountain began to spawn other figures: blond ones and a black one; and the black one, swollen at the jaw and carrying an empty rifle, ran about with the malignant fury of a mad dog, while the blond ones gathered up arrows and spears.

Ensued a thorough searching of the woods, the light men flitting through the timber as soundlessly as shadows, the dusky one alternately growling fierce threats against the Northerner who had knocked him out and raving that no white men should live to go forth and tell the world of his blackness. Then the grim band went forth into the savanna, loping northward on the supposed out-trail of the vanished gunmen.

Whether the king vulture saw all these things is problematical. If so, he also saw that, hour by hour and day by day, hunters and hunted drew steadily away from each other, following divergent lines. He saw, too, perhaps, if he glanced that way, that the face of the ogrish mountain became blurred by the smokes of cremation fires, to which the blond women, commanded by a brown one, dragged dead raiders who otherwise might have bred pestilence.

Many a black vulture assisted those women in the work of demolition, but the varicolored king followed his own chosen prey; a helmeted, blond, glaze-eyed man staggering with fever, who walked at first with jaws clenched, later with mouth loose and fragmentary babblings of delirium, and finally without sense of anything save burning heat and indomitable will to arise when he fell.

Sometimes, it was true, that man did not arise; he lay insensible; and then the winged ghoul began to plane downward in wide swings. But the others would not abandon him, as was right and proper in this stony-hearted land. Some one always picked him up and carried him until he could walk again. So the five hung together on the ground, and the one hung alone in the sky; and day by day the six of them crept ever into the northwest.

In those bitter four days the dogged plodders found two waterholes; and at one a quick shot slew a little deer. By grace of this slim luck and the precious gourds they retained the power to carry on. And now, at last, they had reached the very apex of the sharp angle where the rhomboid ended. To left and right and ahead rose the tree-wall, the shadows beyond looking wondrously cool. The bony-faced quintet stopped and stood a moment, scanning the trees with heat-blurred gaze.

In that moment the Spanish pair slowly turned their heads, Portonio sniffing the air, León listening hard. Then both spoke at once.

"Water," hoarsely announced León, tilting his head to the left.

"Smoke," asserted Portonio, sniffing again.

Faintly to ears and nostrils came the murmur of a stream and the tang of burning wood. They began to move along, searching for the best opening into the tangled forest. Then, for a brief quarter-minute, appeared a man.

AT THE border of the jungle he stood: An Indian hunter, carrying a bow and a single arrow. Petrified, he stared at the fearsome five who peered back at him. He knew them; and León, at least, knew him—one of the wild Tamara rovers who had carried a tale from the Caño Negro and thus prepared the way for the baiting of a remorseless trap.

Now, beholding those doomed men suddenly reappearing from the region of the dread Talking Mountain and advancing on him with wolfish gaze, the aborigine stood rooted to the ground—then whirled and fled as from demons.

With a hoarse growl, Portonio plunged after him. There was no path, but the woods proved fairly open at that point, and the jungle-wise veteran followed the fugitive by the noises of his headlong flight. Soon he heard a scared yell and a vague commotion. A few more strides brought him out on the shore of a rocky stream, where a small dugout floated and a crude pole hut stood empty of life. In the shelter

hung four hammocks; before it burned a little fire, at which a monkey and a couple of fish were broiling on slanting sticks. The campers had snatched their weapons and dived into the bush.

The rest of the hard-bitten little band of wayfarers came in at the best speed remaining to them; scanned the encompassing forest; and, without compunction, commandeered the camp and all pertaining thereto. They wallowed in the stream, soaking up its cooling waters at every pore. They ate the abandoned fish and meat. They slept in the hammocks and the canoe —Portonio occupying the hollowed log.

In the morning they took the paddles and the dugout and drove away down the stony stream. And neither by dark nor by day did the makers of the camp remonstrate. In fact, for all that was seen or heard of them, they might have been mere transparent shadows of the shadow-thronged forest. Even had they known that two of the dreaded rifles were empty and the others almost out of cartridges, they would not have dared lift arrow or dart against these supermen whom the *demonios* of the Talking Mountain had failed to subjugate.

Of the supermen themselves, one now traveled as a log within a log. Knowlton had collapsed, and lay in coma. Breathing shallowly, protected from sun by a crude canopy of withes and plantain-leaves, he rested motionless amidships. For a day and a half his comrades fiercely pushed paddles and dodged through *raudales*, driving headlong for the Ventuari and their Monoblanco cache.

Several snap shots at monkeys and birds gave them food of a sort, but none of this could the dying man eat. Their hard faces grew grimmer than ever before; and from time to time each of them glanced bitterly at the battered packsack wherein rested a robe-wrapped fortune in emeralds, hearing again a voice now silent, exclaiming—

"I'd trade the lot for a stiff shot of quinine."

Perhaps malicious old Guayana, reading their hearts, grinned again with all her dingy teeth. The green stones they had looted from her were only an added torment, mocking them with their worthlessness.

Far above, the king vulture still hung, watching and waiting.

At last the paddlers surged out into broader water. Their somber expressions lightened. The Ventuari! A half mile down, and then up another *caño*, waited their trunks, and tinned food—and quinine. With last-lap strength they spurted for that *caño*. They reached it, entered it, grounded at the port—eyed one another with startled gaze.

The canoe which they had left here was gone.

Smitten by an unnerving thought, they scrambled ashore and pounded heavily up to the hidden hillock. There they halted in sickening dismay.

The cache was looted.

There stood the pole table—bare. Beside it lay both the trunks, hacked to pieces. Around lay a few odds and ends of photographic supplies and such things. All else was gone.

The story was plain. Indians had come and carried off everything useful to them. To their minds, the white men who had gone to the land of the *blondos* had gone to doom. They would never return. So why leave good food and other treasures to rot and rust, benefiting no man? Thus they had reasoned, and upon that reasoning had acted. And now——

Suddenly Portonio pointed. Under a fern glinted a small brown bottle, apparently whole. McKay strode across the macanilla thorns and swooped up the container.

"Thank God!" he exulted. "Quinine! Five hundred grains! Sealed!"

And he plunged down the slope to the canoe.

"Injuns were leery of it," guessed Tim. "Afraid 'twas poison or somethin'. The low-lived dog-robbers, I hope they et some o' looey's photo stuff and died with the belly-ache!"

Knowlton was too far gone to swallow pills. Wherefore his mates fell to work with stones and ground the white globules to powder; dissolved the powder in a little water; and thus forced down his throat a bitter dose of a hundred grains. It was a "stiff shot" indeed, but none too heroic.

This done, the paddlers reseated themselves, backed down the narrow stream, and reentered the Ventuari. Hours of daylight still remained; and the dismal Monoblanco region, with its treacherous trails, its wandering ghost of a white man left to die by Indians, its ghastly memories

of a black-white dead-alive madman, and its cache-robbers, held no inducements to linger.

The fierce old Ventuari, which, a scant three weeks ago, had sullenly and stubbornly fought these invaders of her forbidden fastness, now shoved them snarlingly out of it. Treacherous and cunning as ever, she sought time and again to smash their craft in her white waters, to drown them and obliterate them forever. But, with the hawk-eyed León conning at the bow and the water-wise Portonio steering astern, the malicious witch failed.

They shot through one trap after another, touching a submerged rock at times, but never losing control. When they halted for the night, canoe and men still were unscathed. More, the silent, supine form amidships had regained fitful consciousness.

Another day, and the land of green shadows was behind them. They were out in the thin-fringed savanna, with its occasional far views, its clean breezes, and its great bowl of fleece-clouded blue sky. Sundown brought them to the mouth of the Caño Cerbatana—Creek of Blowguns. And there an odd thing came about.

AS THEY crawled wearily ashore to make a perfunctory camp and seek game, down the creek came floating another canoe. It brought three black men; the outcasts who had journeyed for days behind the ascending adventurers and at this same spot had solemnly watched them go on to meet their fate. Now those three drifted deliberately down and silently scanned the battered, tattered, famished five, blackened by sun but not by *sehi*, whose eyes still were sane and whose souls were unbroken.

Presently they came ashore, bringing two *pauji* turkeys, a royal duck, two agoutis, and a wild hog—a veritable feast. They took machetes and cut firewood, poles, and leaves. They built a hut wherein the white men might sling their hammocks. Then they squatted around the fire and helped to cook the meat. And all the time they spoke never a word.

The starved white men ate like wolves. Even Knowlton—who that day had swallowed another terrific dose of quinine and now was fully conscious—managed to stow away the succulent flesh of an agouti. Then he fell into a deep sleep. When virtually nothing remained of the banquet, León evoked from the black Samaritans the only words spoken by them that night.

"The old man of the Talking Mountain," he said, without preliminary, "is dead."

A flash leaped across the dusky faces. They looked quickly at one another.

"*Hechicero! Muert'!*" marveled one. "The sorcerer! Dead!"

"He is broken into small pieces and thrown into a hole, and rats gnaw his bones," amplified the Spaniard, with a gesture as if casting away something contemptible.

No more was said. The three continued squatting for some time, studying faces and marveling. At length they arose, walked to their canoe, and were gone in the night.

But at the crack of day they returned. Wordless, as before, they brought new meat. When camp was broken they silently entered their own boat again and, unasked and unasking, voyaged down the Ventuari with the indomitable whites. And they stayed with them until, on the next day, they reached the deserted camp at Oso.

There, while the white men rested, they went inland to hunt. Only one of the three came back, bearing game. Of the others he would say nothing. In fact, the only thing he did say was—

"Wait."

The whites did wait, while the lone blackened man hung about like a shadow, except for fruitful hunting excursions, and while Knowlton fought back toward a little strength. The wait lasted for a day and a half. Then, while all dozed in siesta, a slither of moving feet caused León to lift his head. An instant later he bounded out of his hammock with a joyous shout.

"Frasco! Gil!"

Grinning, glistening with sweat, the two faithful Maquiritares who had vanished on the Rio Periqueta came striding to the hut. With them marched the missing black pair, who, unbidden, had sped across the savanna and through the belts of forest to summon relief from León's headquarters.

For a time the hut was in a small tumult of welcome, questions, and exasperatingly uncommunicative answers by the light-skinned Maquiritares. Then León missed the black ones. As he glanced about for them, Frasco pointed riverward. Out there, poling back toward their home *caño*, were the silent victims of the *sehi*.

Their self-imposed mission completed, they were going without reward, thanks, or farewell. Shouts failed to make them even turn their heads. Steadily they forged up against the current until they passed from sight.

And then, high in the boundless blue, the winged ghoul which so long had hovered above the retreating invaders of Guayana voiced one harsh croak of baffled malice and shot away eastward—returning, perhaps, to a cragbound abyss wherein lay a splintered wreck with head and face strangely like that of the vulture king. Far-sighted and tenacious though he might be, he was beaten by something incomprehensible to his coldly calculating mind—the vagaries of human hearts and the loyalties of men.

CHAPTER XXVII

UNDER THE STARS

ONCE more night brooded upon the hut-studded clearing of Loco León. Once more, within the palm domicile of its master, five white men lounged lazily in hammocks. Spartan though the simplicity of that man-camp might be, its crude comforts now seemed palatial; and its owner and its visitors, lolling with cigarets aglow, were completely content.

Clean-shaven, newly clothed, full-fed, they bore little resemblance to the raw-boned tatterdemalions who recently had emerged from the harsh mystery-land of the mountains. Only one of them—a blond Northerner, pinched and wan—still showed plainly the ravages of the grueling retreat; and even he, though still convalescent, was strong enough to put up a fight if need be.

Down at the port, a graceful launch lay awaiting the impulse which would send her speeding away with all her masters. Just within the door rested a meager pile of duffle, and against a wall near the hammocks leaned three rifles in a row. On the little table lay a fourth—a walnut-stocked, bolt-action, .30-caliber weapon of beautifully refined design—and a flat military pistol of the latest type: Parting gifts to their Spanish comrade by Knowlton and McKay.

There, too, lay a heap of green stones; the loot from the vulture's cave, dumped on the hand-hewn boards for present inspection and forthcoming division. Another day would find the tacit partnership dissolved.

Now beside that table stood Frasco, once more wearing a shirt, and looking with far more interest at the guns than at the gems. It was of the emeralds, though, that his patron would have him speak.

"And you know of no place where more of such stones are?" the Spaniard was repeating.

"No. At Esmeralda are green stones. But they are not like these."

"I know. Those green stones which gave Esmeralda its name are only worthless crystals. *Bien.* Then from where could these have come?"

The Maquiritare was silent for a time. At length he ventured:

"There is a tale. Long ago came white men from the west. They had green stones. They wanted gold."

"Ah! And what became of those men?"

The Indian eyes narrowed, and the lips tightened. No reply came.

"Guess that's the explanation," Knowlton said. "Roving Conquistadores from over Colombia way. There are emeralds in Colombia. They got chased out of there, drifted over here to find El Dorado—and never drifted out."

"Probably that is it," agreed León. "So the emeralds are not of Guayana. That ends that. Now, Frasco, I ask you once more—for the last time—why you and Gil left us on the Periqueta. I have asked before, and you have not answered. If you can not answer now it is because you are ashamed to tell the truth. If you are ashamed of the truth it is because you were not faithful. I can not keep a man who is not faithful. You can answer or you can go. If you go, do not come back. Your name will be forever a stink to the nose of Loco León."

"Aw, have a heart, Loco!" remonstrated Tim. "He's a good guy. Don't fire him."

"I do not believe it will be necessary, señor. But I am determined to know the truth of that matter." The Spaniard's tone was obdurate.

Frasco wavered. Once his countenance hardened and he turned doorward; but then he turned back, looking at his employer in a hurt way. Finally he seemed to swallow something locking his tongue—perhaps habit, perhaps pride.

"We slept," he said shortly. "A man

woke us. He was a *blondo*. He made no sound. He touched us and made motions. We were to go out and talk. We went. We thought it would be only a step, and he was alone. So we took no arms. But he led us back into the forest. There were more *blondos*.

"We could not see them. We could feel them around us in the dark. We were afraid. They are bad. They are sons of a great *demonio*. One must do as they say. If he does not he dies very cruelly. But they did not say anything. While we waited for them to speak something hit us.

"When we saw again it was day. We were in a new place. It was in the forest. We were lost and sick from hurt heads—I and Gil. The two from Uaunana were dead. They were stabbed in the back. That must have been a mistake. The *blondos* killed the wrong men. They meant to kill us of Caño Negro and let those others live. That is what we believe.

"It took nearly a day to find the camp. We were in the woods, down the Periqueta, on the other side. When we found the camp you were gone. The canoe was gone. There was no blood or sign of fight. We tracked you to a *raudal* and back again and out to a *sabana*. There was no more track.

"We went back to the camp and waited a day. Then we walked through the woods to the Ventuari. We did not go to Uaunana. We had no boat and we had quarreled with the men of Uaunana. We walked around Monoblanco and swam across below. Our canoe was there. The other things you had left were gone or broken. We took the canoe and came here to watch your goods. We hoped you would come back. And you did."

Thus he concluded his graphic recital, looking steadily at the Spaniard. And his patron, watching him as steadily, saw that he had told all he knew. What had become of the vanished canoe and its equipment he could never reveal.

It was apparent, however, that those *blondos*, working in absolute silence, must have carried the four Maquiritares to the canoe, loosed it, and somehow passed it through the lower rapids; transported the dead and senseless men back some distance into the jungle, and then gone on to conceal the dugout and its plunder elsewhere for a time. There was no other way whereby the Ventuari men could have been landed downstream, on the wrong side of the river.

"*Buenol*" approved León. "You have spoken straight at last. You and Gil are good men, and you shall stay with me. But do not fear those *blondos* hereafter. They are not *demonios*, but men, and few. They have been cunning as snakes, but only one man did their thinking, and that man is dead. If you meet one of them again, spit in his face and kick him. You can thrash any of them in a fight. Now go to your hammock. *Buen' noche'*."

Across the strong-jawed face of the son of the Caribs shot a joyous grin. Proudly he strode to the doorway, flung aside the burlap screen, and passed into the night.

"A good man," commented McKay. "Glad you didn't have to make good your threat."

"So am I, señor. But I must be master here. I have been a bit too gentle with the superstitions of my men. Hereafter I shall ride with a little tighter rein—and a touch of the spur when it is needed. But perhaps, now that we have broken the grip of that old sorcerer on this land, there will be no need for the spur."

THEY smoked thoughtfully. Then, with a quizzical glance at his fellow blond, Knowlton laughed:

"Aren't we arrogating too much credit to ourselves, old chap? *We* didn't break that old necromancer. It was Black White who did that little job. Give the —— his due."

"And he sure did bust him right," recalled Tim. "And he done more'n that. If it hadn't been for him bumpin' off some o' them Guaharibo —— before we got into action we might have got snowed under. D'ye mind that bunch o' stiffs we found down there by the trees when we started our long hike? Every one of 'em was put out o' business by that fightin' fool of a he-gorilla.

"I dunno how many there was, but I've figured up how many shots he turned loose with our guns, and 'twas forty-one; and I bet more'n half o' them bullets made good. Now if all o' them tough eggs had been alive and goin' strong at the finish instead o' knocked for a gool before they got started, where'd we be now? Not here, I'm thinkin'! We were about shot out, and that starvin' had about killed our pep for a hand-to-hand rough-house. Yeah, it wasn't

us that won that war. The guy that deserves a medal is Mister White of the U. S. A. And the only decoration he gits is a slam in the jaw."

"I'm sorry about that," admitted McKay. "I had to do it. But now that it's over, I'd shake hands with him if I could. Crazy or not, he's a he-man and a white man. Wish there was something we could do for him."

"There is, Capitán," León quickly rejoined. "There is one thing you can do which would mean more to him than anything else; and that is to forget him—to forget that you ever saw or heard of him, and to say nothing about him when you return to your own land."

A pause. Then said Knowlton:

"You're right. He wants to be dead. He doesn't want the world—and especially his own people, whoever they may be—to know his fate. And it would be downright cruel for us to go out and tell the truth about him. It would only torment his folks, and do him no good whatever. Better let his people keep right on believing he's dead and out of all his troubles. That's what I'd want if I were in his place. Well, I'm dumb. Right here and now I forget that I ever heard of him."

"Me too," seconded Tim. "Even if anybody could git him out o' here and back home—and that ain't likely, with that gang o' his to lick first — what could they do with him? Lock him up in the cuckoo-house, that's all. I'd rather shoot a guy than send him to that place."

"Right," concurred McKay. "It's a go, then. Not a man of us squeals. And if you see him again, León, tell him so. And tell him we wish him luck. But I wonder— How will you make out with him hereafter? Think he'll have it in for you now?"

León shook his head, dropped his cigaret butt, and yawned.

"I think not," he said. "There has been no enmity between us, and I believe there will be none. He may be angry now, but his anger will cool. I am the only white friend he has in all the world, and he knows that I wish him only good. I will give him your message. Now, *amigos*, shall we divide this little pile among us? It grows a little late, and I am sleepy."

"Yea, bo," assented Tim with alacrity. "Divvy up the swag and hit the hay. The transport's sailin' at sun-up."

Silence descended on the dim room. In the soft light of candles burning in bottlenecks, the gems were matched for size and assorted into four piles. Portonio, watching with lazy interest, took no hand in the division; for it had already been agreed that, in lieu of any share in the emeralds, he should receive from his señores a cash sum which to him meant astounding affluence.

With the partition completed, the three Northerners stowed their stones in wide soft money-belts and tossed them temporarily into their hammocks. The Southerner, yawning again, swept his share carelessly into an old tin can.

"And so it ends, as the movies say," smiled Knowlton. "We've gotten what we came for, and then some. We've run down the 'lost white race,' and found that they're only the light-skinned Maquiritares, plus a handful of biological freaks. We've had an interesting time and a rattling good scrap, and we've picked up a sweet little pocketful of plunder. Now I suppose that on our way out it would be a graceful act for us to call at San Fernando de Atabapo and present these little Irish tokens to Governor Ramirez, would it not?"

"Yeah, it would not!" erupted Tim. "If we halt at that there town the Irish tokens that greasy crook'll git won't be graceful—they'll be disgraceful. The first one will be a slam in the snoot and the next a boot in the belly, and after that——"

"Say it with flowers," chuckled McKay. "But we don't stop there. We have gas enough in the cans to run us through to Maipures, and there we'll find our reserve supply. We'll leave the illustrious governor to chew his mustachio and wonder what happened. Now let's turn in."

Soon the candles were blown out. Darkness pounced on the room—darkness, and silence relieved only by the regular breathing of five comrades resting together for the last time.

DARKNESS and silence ruled also without the palm walls; a dusk wherein the only points of light were myriad stars trooping across a velvet sky, and a soundlessness which became sinister; for around the clearing spoke no night-trilling tree-toad or other natural thing.

For some reason, the small creatures of the sunless hours were dumb, seemingly holding their breath. From the hut where rested Frasco and Gil came neither light nor sound; they were buried in unsuspecting slumber. Nowhere in all the shadow-bound *sitio* was visible or audible sign of menace, or even of life. Yet both were there.

Beside the palm wall of the master's house, hardly a dozen feet from the master himself, a long black shape lay along the dark ground. Masked in the gloom under the near-by trees lay a score of other shapes, not so dusky, yet now invisible; the forms of muscular, hard-faced fighters, whose eyes were riveted on that palm wall. The starshine glinted faintly, coldly, on steel lying beside each of those motionless figures; on the naked blades of machetes and the barrels of powerful repeating rifles, full-loaded with cartridges just brought by a devious route from far British Guiana.

Slowly, noiselessly, the black form rose. For a moment it stood facing the wall, as if its wild eyes could see through it as easily as its ears had just heard all that passed within. Then it turned and stalked through the dimness toward the others. In its right fist swayed a gun.

Up from the ground started the wolf-pack, weapons ready, heads forward, muscles tense. But they made no forward bound. The black wolf who was their king had given no signal. They waited.

Straight up to them he came. In a harsh whisper he spoke.

"We do not kill. *Vamos!*"

The wolfish eyes stared. None moved. The hard blue-gray irises of their master glittered. His left arm shot out, pointing eastward.

"*Vamos!*" he repeated, the low command striking like a bullet.

They moved. Unquestioning, they filed across the clearing, marching with panther-ish tread. Into the eastern woods they passed, and on through the density to the savanna beyond. Behind, vigilant and dominant, swung the ferocious fighter who had brought them there.

"White men!" he muttered. "Yes, by God! White men! Won't squeal. Lucky for them—huh huh huh! Wish me luck. Fighting fool of a he-gorilla. Huh huh huh! That's me. Shake hands if they could. Crazy? Blah! Dead. Dead and out of all my troubles. Oh, ——, yes! Hee hee ha ha ha!"

The Indians ahead gave no attention to his chuckles and mumbles. Stolidly they marched on, on, into the thin-treed savanna, under the starry void. And on into the wastes with them marched the killer who controlled them, leaving unharmed the five who, though their lives were forfeit because they had seen his blasted face, now were not to be killed.

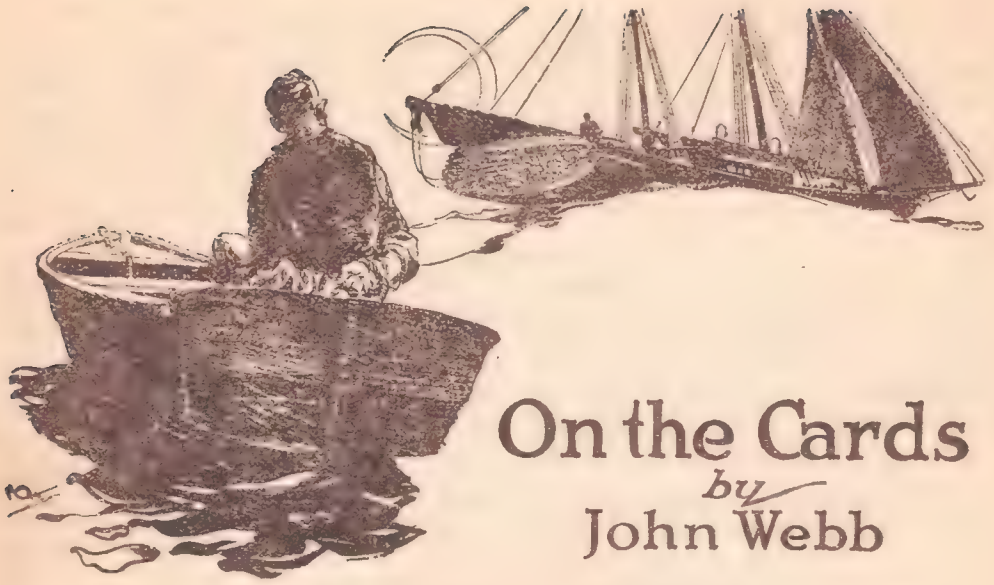
Branded in body and mind by the black blight of Guayana—a veritable dead man walking in the night—yet he was still a live man and a white man, with heart vaguely responsive to the kinship of men of his blood and breed. So he passed away into the silence and the mystery and was gone; a man of the shadows, forever lost.

And the stars, looking down on the retreating file of unfired rifles, twinkled. For they were not mere cold glints of hard-hearted Guayana, but world-wise little elves of the high heavens, which recked nothing of skins, or even of minds, but which slyly peered into souls. And they knew, with the prescience born of a million years of watching, that in the slow-rolling months to come this lost one would ever and anon find peace in retrospect; dwelling again on the faces and the voices and the words of straight-speaking, straight-shooting men who had been his comrades for a day and then gone from him—but who kept his secret safe.

So they smiled, and swung on westward, as the grim band below them marched eastward; and around the clearing the night toads twittered cheerily once more; and within the houses men slept and dreamed.

In Guayana all was well.

THE END



On the Cards

by John Webb

Author of "Fighters Fair and Foul," "Eight Seconds," etc.

"NOM DE NOM!" exclaimed the fat Frenchman, and he thumped on the table with his fist so that the glasses jumped and slopped their contents on to the cheap cotton cloth. "That —— woman! She is——"

At a loss for a descriptive word, he stopped and shook his head disgustedly.

His two companions turned and glanced toward the small stage at the rear of the cabaret, where a yellow-haired, big-eyed young woman was painfully struggling through what was supposed to be a Spanish dance.

Jason, the steamship passenger agent, turned back and interestedly watched the exertions of a fly that had fallen into his glass of beer.

"She's too skinny," he said after a pause, as he saw the fly drag itself to the edge of the glass and slip down to the table. "Too skinny. Some day she'll fall through a crack in the floor and nobody'll ever know what became of her. Though, she wasn't so hard to look at when she first came here, three years ago," he added.

"I did not mean her appearance," said the Frenchman.

His glance traveled to the wide front doorway, where a white-haired young man, a cigaret hanging from his lips, leaned against the frame at one side. The young man was frowning thoughtfully at the floor.

"Oh—that!" said Jason, with a short laugh. "Yes, a nasty affair. It will wind up in a killing."

The third man at the table, Captain "Mac," a somber, hard-faced little seaman, was still watching the woman on the stage.

"That's Maisie Blake, you know, Captain Mac," said Jason. "When 'Tub' Watson brought her here to Colon with him, three years ago, she called herself some other name—'Drake,' or 'Lake,' or some such thing, but the truth soon leaked out. Yes, she's Maisie Blake."

Captain Mac shook his head slowly, and one corner of his mouth lifted slightly in a scornful grimace.

"And the young man with the white hair, standing in the doorway, is 'Whitie' Blake, her brother-in-law," said Hilaire, the Frenchman. "He has been here about four months."

"And four months of —— it's been for Tub Watson," added Jason. "Whitie's killing himself with absinthe, but he swears he'll take Tub along with him when he goes. And I believe he will."

"*Parbleu*, yes!" agreed Hilaire.

"He came here out of nowhere, one day, and made Tub Watson give him a job. A job! All he does is drink absinthe and insult and threaten Tub. He tells Tub he

can't decide whether to kill him or send him to jail. Got something on him, you see. Tub's been in a funk ever since Whitie showed up. Had Whitie waylaid twice. Once Tub's men hit Whitie on the head and threw him off Old Wharf, but they didn't hit him hard enough, or maybe the water brought him to, and he swam under water to beneath the wharf and hung to a pile till they left, thinking he had sunk. Another time, about two o'clock in the morning, three of them were at him with knives in Battle Alley, when Hilaire, here, and Tim McConnell, barkeep in Creegan's Panama Bar, came out and beat them off."

"Tim and old Creegan and I had been playing poker on the end of the bar," explained Hilaire, "and when we heard the noise Tim and I ran out. We found Whitie backed in a corner and defending himself with the barrel of his revolver, swinging it like a club. The hammer had jammed on a piece of cloth from his coat, he told us. He wasn't afraid, though, that Whitie—not at all."

"Oh, he's got nerve," said Jason, "if nothing else. Did you ever meet Whitie, Captain Mac?"

"Yes; I was introduced to him one day; but I was in a hurry at the time, and didn't speak to him more than a minute."

"Then he probably didn't tell you about his brother, Steve Blake, the gun-runner?"

"No; but I knew Steve. And I heard something of how he was killed. I heard rumors of Tub Watson's part in it. A dirty business."

"*Parbleu*, yes!" put in the fat Frenchman, nodding. "A swinish business. That Watson!"

"And that Maisie Blake," added Jason. "Whitie tells everybody about it that'll listen. That's one of his ways of tormenting Tub. He never lets up, every chance he gets he's telling somebody what a coward and traitor Watson is. A dozen times I've heard him start the story in his presence. Tub always leaves. He's near crazy now, and getting desperate. There'll be a killing."

MAISIE BLAKE had finished her dance now, and the five-piece negro orchestra was banging out an American jazz tune. The tables were beginning to fill as patrons drifted in to while away time by drinking and watching the dreary thing that Tub Watson, the proprietor called a "revue." Whitie Blake still stood by the door, on his face the same expression, half scowl, half smile. The cigaret hanging from his lips was dead.

Tub Watson, a big brutish-looking man, came through the tables from the rear, and Whitie Blake, looking up, started toward him, caught him by the coat lapel, and said quickly—

"One dollar, Tub."

"One dollar!"

The big man wrenched free and drew back his fist as though to strike.

"What d'you mean—one dollar? Why, you —— you ——"

"One dollar, Tub," repeated Blake, a mirthless, contemptuous smile on his lean face, and he snapped his fingers impatiently, like an animal trainer who insists on being obeyed.

Without another word, Watson thrust his hand in his pocket, took out a bill and gave it to Blake, who swung on his heel and went out the door.

Jason and Hilaire exchanged glances, and the latter laughed.

"There, you see?" he said.

Whitie Blake returned from the street, and with an air of grim satisfaction, came toward them.

"Did you see the mucker crawl?" he asked, dropping into a seat at Jason's invitation. "He always crawls. Been crawling all his life. I wanted the dollar for a beachcomber friend of mine. I liked to see Tub shell out. And maybe it doesn't hurt him to do it!"

"You know Captain Mac, don't you, Whitie?" said Jason.

"Yes, sure; met him some time ago. How are you, Cap'n? You're 'One-Two Mac,' the fighting cap'n, aren't you?"

"That's him," put in Jason. "Did you ever tell Captain Mac about your brother Steve and Watson?"

"No, but I shall. Gladly!"

He stood up and looked about the cabaret and, seeing Tub Watson standing by the entrance to the bar, shouted in a loud voice that rose above the banging and whining of the orchestra—

"Hey, Tub, come here!"

The big proprietor turned, saw Blake beckoning over the heads of the intervening people and with a wrathful expression on

his big face came blustering toward him.

"What d'you mean by bawlin' out like that?" he demanded of Whitie Blake. "Here I am tryin' to make a real high-class cabaret out of this place, and you yellin' like that at the top o' your lungs ——"

"Shut up!" snapped Blake, settling into his chair and smiling across the table at Jason.

"Well—what d'you want?" grumbled Tub, glowering down at the top of the other's head.

He was a big man, Watson, strongly built and without a great deal of fat upon his frame; it was his slouchy carriage and coarse, uncouth manner that earned him the epithet "Tub." He appeared a man who would give a good account of himself in a rough-and-tumble, and it seemed strange that he should be dominated by the pale weakling who sat in the chair before him.

"I was just thinking—" began Blake at last, still smiling vacantly across the table; and in a calm, emotionless voice he went on with hardly a pause, "Perhaps you would like to tell these gentlemen how you murdered my brother and stole his wife?"

Tub Watson's face purpled and his teeth gritted as he ground them together. His whole body trembling with fury, he bent over Blake and raised both great arms as if he would crush the other where he sat; then with a wheezy grunt of rage, he screwed about and plunged away.

Blake had not looked up; his arms were folded loosely across his chest and he was smilingly scrutinizing an unlighted cigaret that lay on the table before him. He sighed as the other swung away, and ran his long, thin fingers through his soft white hair.

"I thought he would give me a chance to kill him that time," he said, and swung open one side of his coat and showed the butt of a revolver slung in a shoulder holster beneath his arm.

"I would have shot him through the stomach, and he would have died slowly," he murmured.

Captain Mac leaned across the table.

"Why, man, are you crazy!" he exclaimed. "What do you think they would do to you if you had shot him?"

"String me up by the neck, probably," answered Blake calmly.

HE STRUCK a match and lighted his cigaret, and leaning back, sent a smoke ring twisting toward the ceiling; then he leaned forward, and clutched the table edge with trembling fingers, and his smile was gone.

"And do you think I care?" he said fiercely. "Do you? My life's not worth a German mark to anybody—not even to me! I'm as good as dead right now! Why, look here—" his narrow chest resounded hollowly as he thumped upon it with his fist—"there's not enough left on my lungs to fill a thimble! And my stomach—I have to live on soup! I'm dead on my feet, I tell you! When I send Tub Watson where he sent my brother, I'll simply lie down and tell 'em to cover me up. I'm nothing but a shell. Eh? Why? The way I've lived, of course. Women—drink—absinthe—absinthe! And that reminds me— Boy!"

He relaxed and settled back, and sent another smoke ring writhing toward the pink lights overhead.

"Absinthe," he told the negro youth who came to the table, "and see what these gentlemen will have." And he added with a flickering smile:

"Tell Mr. Watson this round of drinks is on the house."

He tossed his half-burned cigaret away and lighted another.

"Did you ever see the schooner *Shark?*"

Captain Mac, in the act of rolling a cigaret, paused, thought for a moment and nodded.

"Black three-master with a gold stripe, spar-colored masts and white housing? Yes, I've seen her; but not for a long time."

"Not for over three years. Well, the *Shark* belonged to us, to my brother Steve and me. She was the fastest thing on the Western Ocean. Slid through the water like a snake. Smart! And handle—she handled like a yacht. Steve and I bought her after the war; made our money with dice and cards in France, and on the transport coming home. Picked up a crew of cutthroats and went pirating. That's just what it was—'pirating.' We were pirates and scavengers. We picked the bones of stranded ships, ran liquor, smuggled arms, and were always on the lookout for anything that offered big returns, no matter what the risk.

"Steve was master. He had been a steamship officer before the war and had a

license for master o' sail; he'd enlisted in the army, me with him, because he thought he'd have a better chance to get to grips with the enemy, and he didn't care much who the enemy were, nor what they were fighting about. I was mate.

"Steve met a girl in New Orleans, married her and insisted on bringing her along with us. I told him she was no good, and he knocked me down the after companionway for telling him. He thought a lot of that —— Steve was a fool that way. He was a thorough scoundrel, too, don't forget that. So am I, a scoundrel. And so is Tub Watson. Yes, Steve was a scoundrel. But he was a hero, too.

"A princess pinned a medal on Steve's coat before a regiment. And an old man with whiskers kissed him. Steve didn't like that. I got a medal too. Swapped it for a bottle of absinthe. Steve tossed his into a dice game when we were broke. Tub Watson didn't get a medal. He was a captain, but he didn't go to France. His 'executive ability' was needed in New York —to sit at a desk and flash his gold braid before the yeomanettes.

"Well, one day, when we were hovering off Fire Island, waiting to unload a thousand cases of Scotch and Bacardi from Havana, Tub came out to see us in a motor boat. He asked us if we wanted to run some arms to Venezuela; said there was a revolution getting under weigh, and he was an agent for the revolutionists. It promised big returns, and we took the job.

"Ten days later, off Montauk Point, we loaded the rifles and ammunition from a coal lighter that was supposed to be on its way to Boston. Tub Watson came aboard with the cargo; said he would make the trip with us and pay us after the stuff was delivered. We ran south and cruised about in the Carribbean waiting for Tub to give us the word to go in.

"I'd been drinking for ten days straight, and at last they had to lash me in my bunk to keep me from going nuts. One day Tub fell overboard. He can't swim. Steve jumped after him, knocked him out with a smack on the jaw, to keep him from dragging them both under, and swam with him for half an hour while the bosun hauled the schooner about and beat up to them again. Steve saved his life. A fine job!

" 'I'll never forget you for that, Steve,' said Tub.

"Yes, Steve was a scoundrel, and I'm a scoundrel, but no word ever invented will fit Tub Watson. He and that woman —— filth! I saw them making up to each other, as drunk as I was. I told Steve—and had to bust him twice with an oak belaying pin to keep him off me.

" 'You cut that talk, you ——!' said Steve, trying to get in under my pin. 'She's all right. And besides, can't you see how grateful Tub is, for me saving his life?'

"That's the kind of man Steve was. He couldn't see Tub double-crossing him at all. Steve was very bad and very good, if you know what I mean; and I think he averaged up about as well as the people who are only a little bad and a little good. That same night he lashed me in my bunk—said I was seeing things.

"Well, the next night was dark; Tub gave the word and Steve ran the schooner in under the coast of Venezuela. Tub and Steve went ashore—to make arrangements, Tub said. A few hours later Tub came pulling back, all out of breath.

" 'Steve's been captured by the Federals,' he told us. 'We'll have to get out to sea.'

"I raised —— about it; wanted to get out of my bunk and go ashore after Steve, but Tub wouldn't unlash me. Said he didn't want me to get the willies and go over the side. Said one good man gone was enough! He took command, told the bosun to get the hook out of the mud and put to sea. I near went crazy, lashed there in my bunk and knowing they were counting off a firing squad ashore for Steve.

"And that's just what they did! I heard about it afterward. They stood him up against a 'dobe wall and filled him full of lead. But he went out like a regular guy! The last thing he did before they croaked him was spit on the officer's shoe! He went to —— all right, Steve, no doubt of that; but I'll bet he wasn't there long before he began to boss the job. He was a —— good top-sergeant!

"THE next night Tub came down to my room, tied my hands and feet together, stuffed my mouth full of oakum, and dragged me on deck. He'd sent the wheelsman forward, and the wheel was hanging in the becket. He lowered the gig that we carried swung over the

counter, dropped me in it and cast it adrift. His one mistake, he should have lashed a weight to my neck and sunk me.

"Two days later I was picked up, stark raving crazy, by a fruit boat. I spent six months in the Seamen's Hospital, in New York, and it was there that I met the man who told me how Steve had died. And from him I learned that Tub had double-crossed us all around. Steve hadn't been captured by the Federals, but by the Revolutionists. It was a put-up job. They shot Steve; Tub got rid of me, and the officer and Tub split the money that we were to get. Besides, Tub got the woman.

"She'd known about it all the time, had helped Tub plan the dirty scheme. After they unloaded the arms and split the money, Tub ran the schooner to Caracas. He had told the crew that I broke away during the night and jumped over the side. He sold the schooner to a man in Caracas, paid off the crew, and beat it, with Steve's woman, of course.

"After I had this all straightened out in my mind, and got out of the hospital, I started out to look for Tub Watson. It took me a couple of years to find him, but I did. Here he was, Tub Watson, a good sport, liked by everybody, getting fat and rich on the money he stole; and down there in some swamp on the coast of Venezuela lay the body of the man who never betrayed a trust or a friend, and who had had a medal pinned on his chest by a princess! Yes, I found Tub Watson; and I've fastened myself to him like the old man in the story book."

"He'll have you murdered some night," said Jason.

Whitie Blake shook his head slowly.

"No-o, I don't think so. It's not on the cards for him to kill me—at least, not before I get him. I came here determined to kill them both. I don't know why I didn't do it when I walked in and saw them talking together over there by the bar. But they looked so frightened, and so miserable all of a sudden, that I thought it would be a shame to spoil it; thought it would be better to let things drag along for a while and sort of draw out the agony.

"Tub always carried a gun before I came here, they tell me; but since then he goes unarmed. Wise, you see? He knows that as long as he is unarmed he is safe, unless he starts trouble and gives me an excuse for plugging him.

"And then, a funny thing, I began to feel sorry for the woman. She's been having a tough time of it. He beats her, you know. And she's lost her looks, what with the climate, and the life, and having to put up with him——"

For a moment he scowled at the cigaret between his fingers, then went on:

"And in spite of the way he beats her, she's crazy about him. She watches me like a hawk, always, scared half to death that I'm going to take a shot at Tub. And every time I see those big cow eyes of hers on me I feel sorry for her. Now, tell me, why does she stick to a man who treats her like a dog, and why do I feel sorry for her?"

He ran his fingers through his soft white hair, and turning in his chair, gazed for a moment toward the stage, where Maisie Blake was again doing her "turn." Then he turned back, and held up to the rosy light from the overhead chandelier his glass of opaque liquid.

"Here's to a crazy world!" he said, and drank it down.

He coughed into his handerchief, then reached for a cigaret.

"Why doesn't Watson have you arrested, and charge you with threatening his life?" asked Captain Mac.

Whitie Blake gave a short mirthless chuckle.

"He's afraid I'd let something out." He leaned forward and lowered his voice.

"Here's something that's not generally known, and I don't want it repeated; when Tub sold the *Shark* he had to use forged papers. Do you see? That's what he's afraid of getting out. If I wanted to I could send Tub to jail and recover the *Shark*. But I don't want to.

"I don't want the *Shark*. I'm too near death to bother with a schooner. Tub doesn't want me in jail—he wants me dead. His men have tried to get me several times. Even some of the police are in his pay. If they could catch me in some kind of a mix-up on the street, they'd beat or shoot me to death before I could surrender.

"My play is to be nice, keep out of trouble, and stick to Tub Watson like a porous plaster. I may not live many months, perhaps not many weeks, or days,

but I'll stick around and make life miserable for Tub as long as I can; and when I do go, Tub Watson goes with me! I don't know what I'll do about Maisie; I wish I didn't feel sorry for her."

THE swinging doors at the front were suddenly flung open, there was a chorus of harsh voices, and into the café filed six rough, tough, hard-bitten seamen. First came a short, squat, red-faced Cockney with reckless eyes and a stubborn chin; next came a towering, hard muscled two-hundred-and-forty-pound Dane; then a big American with the face of a prize-fighter, protruding brows, a nose slewed to one side, and heavy jaws; then came three wild-looking, husky ruffians whose bold carriage and daring eyes challenged the world to rough-and-tumble combat.

They were all part of Captain Mac's crew; the Cockney leader was the boatswain. They were every bit as hard as they looked; and there wasn't one of them who did not hate Captain Mac, nor one who would have hesitated in following him unarmed against a regiment. Their hatred of the somber little sea-captain in no way diluted the respect they had for his ability, both as a seaman and as a fighting man.

"Here come some of your jailbirds, Captain Mac," said Jason. "You surely pick some sweet babies to sail with you. You must like 'em tough."

"I do," answered the little shipmaster.

He drew up one corner of his mouth and grinned sarcastically at them as they filed past; and they leered back, and breathed black sea-oaths between their teeth.

"They're the kind of men I like," said Whitie Blake, looking after them. "Steve was like that." And he added somewhat wistfully, "I was always kind of sickly."

The six men thrust their way between the crowded tables, treading on feet, elbowing, bumping tables and spilling drinks. Chairs were caught up and carried to an unoccupied table, and the six men sat down, and bellowed in unison for something to drink.

"*Nom de nom!*" exclaimed Hilaire. "They're wild beasts, those men. And potential heroes, every one of them. If society could only curb them, use them, civilize them! What inefficiency, what a waste of good material! A regiment of such animals, properly armed, singing, cursing, fighting—can you imagine it?"

"I can more easily imagine them on the deck of a ship fighting a howling hurricane," said Captain Mac, smiling with his thin lips. "I've seen them at *that*."

There was a curse, a blow, a grunt, a waiter slid across the floor and, his tray still in his hands, landed with a crash in a corner.

"He as't me did I want *beer!*" rumbled a deep voice.

"Beer!" growled another. "An' we're syelin' at midnight! 'Oo ever 'eard 'o drinkin' beer on syelin' dye?"

Captain Mac laughed softly, and Whitie Blake gave his mirthless chuckle.

"I'm floor-man," said Whitie. "I'm supposed to keep order. And Tub gave me orders to throw out anybody who makes a disturbance. My eye! I hope they tear things to pieces."

Tub Watson glowered across the room at the six seamen. This rowdyism would do his "high-class" place no good, he knew. But the seamen were spending money, and spending it freely. Noisy money was as good as any other money, thought Tub. Besides, if he should call the police to eject the six men, the free-for-all that would result would be worse than anything that the men would do if let alone. They weren't the kind to meekly obey the orders of a native policeman. He decided not to interfere.

Maisie Blake, having finished her act, left the stage and came down among the tables. She passed close to the table at which sat the six men, and one of them, the big American, reached out and clutched her wrist.

"Give us a kiss, kid," he said, dragging her to him.

She screamed angrily, and struck out with her fists, then shoved the big seaman so that he collided with the table, and tilted glasses and bottles to the floor. The sailor let her go and stood grinning.

Tub Watson, his face purple with anger, plunged toward them, caught Maisie by the shoulders and shook her fiercely.

"You— you——"

Words failed him, and he contented himself with shaking the frightened woman so that her head seemed destined to part company with her body.

"He wanted to—to k-kiss me—" she gulped.

"Well, what of it? He ain't poison! You ——"

The big American, his grin giving way to a scowl, twisted his body and neatly hooked Tub beneath the chin with his fist. Tub went to his knees, gained his feet, and rushed, to go down again from a blow to the jaw that sent him sliding along the floor on his shoulder blades.

"Let the skirt alone, yuh big bum!" rumbled the seaman. "It was my fault. She don't have to kiss me if she don't want to. Beat it, er I'll take another sock at yuh!"

He plumped into his chair and banged on the table for more drinks. Tub slouched to a door that led to a rear hallway, turned, and beckoned Maisie Blake.

"Now he thinks he's going to let out on her," said Whitie Blake, his eyes narrowing.

He arose, tossed away his cigaret, hitched at the weapon beneath his arm, and strode toward the door through which Tub and Maisie Blake had disappeared. Reaching the doorway, he tossed his white hair back from his pale forehead and stepped out of sight.

"I think something is about to happen," said Jason slowly, grimly watching the doorway through which Whitie had gone.

A WOMAN sang from the stage, and the orchestra accompanied her in three distinct keys. The six seamen, the incident of Tub Watson and the girl already forgotten, began to make up for the time they had lost. The other occupants of the place shrugged and went on with their merry-making. Wine, women and song, and music and laughter, and still the three men sat silent, listening, watching that open door and, beyond, the dim hallway.

Captain Mac's hand-made cigaret scorched his fingers, and he swore softly and extinguished it in the ash-tray. Jason pursed his lips to whistle, but didn't, and sat with his head on one side and his ears cocked toward the doorway.

"*Ça chauffe*, it's getting hot!" muttered the fat Frenchman, and he mopped his glistening forehead with a tan silk handkerchief.

And then it happened—a single muffled shot!

The music crashed and trailed off with a discordant wail. The singer on the stage paused with her mouth still open to deliver a note. For five long seconds the entire gathering sat like wax figures in a museum.

Of them all, Captain Mac was the first on his feet, and he was halfway to the open doorway before another stirred.

A great voice roared into the silent big room:

"He shot me! Whitie Blake shot me! Get him—get him—get him!"

Tub Watson, blood streaming from a long gash on his cheek, collided with Captain Mac, and plunged off between the tables, and bent low as if to escape an expected bullet, ran toward the bar at the other side of the room.

"Whitie Blake—get 'im—get 'im!" he continued to shout.

Then from the hall came Whitie Blake, his white hair towseled and flopping in his eyes as he ran, and in one hand he gripped a long blue revolver.

"It's a lie!" he cried to Captain Mac. "The woman shot him. She grabbed my gun from under my arm. Then she shot Tub, dropped the gun and ran out the back way. She locked the door after her."

His darting glance searched among the tables for the low-running Tub; he discovered him and threw up his weapon to fire.

But Captain Mac leaped forward, caught Blake by the shoulder and swung him around.

"Get away, you fool!" snapped the little captain. "Don't you see them coming for you? Out the front door!"

Three quiet men had left the table in a corner and were swiftly and silently making their way toward Whitie Blake. Two of the men were armed with wicked brass knuckles and the third swung a leather-covered blackjack. A half-dozen waiters, evidently obeying signals given by the three silent thugs, were closing in from as many directions.

Two khaki-clad policemen, each with a revolver and a club, were coming cautiously from the street doorway. Tub Watson, now armed with a revolver that his bartender had tossed to him, was peering around the end of the bar.

"Get 'im—get 'im!" he screamed wildly; and he furiously cursed the slowness of the men who were closing in about Blake. The diners and drinkers had left their tables and most of them had rushed into the street; others of them were behind

the bar, and the piano, and any other object that promised shelter.

The floor was left to Blake, Captain Mac, Jason and Hilaire, and the approaching thugs and waiters. From behind the bar came a chorus of rough laughter as the six seamen scrambled among Watson's stock of liquors. And still above all the confusion rose Tub Watson's commands to "get" Whitie Blake.

Captain Mac had Blake, despite his protests, started toward the front door; and Jason and Hilaire were trying to make a way for them through the waiters blocking the entrance.

"Get him across the street and into American territory," shouted Jason to Captain Mac.

But that was just what Watson did not want them to do. He knew that Blake would be safe from his thugs the moment he stepped into the Canal Zone. He did not want to see Blake in jail—he wanted to see him dead. Here was Blake, a revolver in hand, trying to escape from the police after having attempted murder; Tub had long waited for just such an opportunity.

Tub straightened, and leveled his revolver, but could not get a good view of Blake, and changing his mind, ran forward.

"Jump 'im!" he shouted to his men. "Jump the ——!"

The thugs and waiters rushed in a body. Whitie Blake threatened them with his revolver, but a flying bottle struck him on the back of the neck and sent him to his knees. Captain Mac's fist shot out, rapier-like, and sent a thug spinning with a broken jaw; then the others were at him, and fighting fiercely, but coolly, he was forced backward.

He stumbled over Blake, and fell on his back, but even as he did so he kicked the breath from a waiter with a short swing of his foot. Hilaire had been struck with a blackjack, and was senseless on the floor; and Jason, crying with rage, was being driven into the street by the two policemen.

WHITIE BLAKE lay on his face. His revolver had slipped from his hand and was beneath him. He had both arms wrapped about his head to ward off the kicks and blows of the thugs. Captain Mac had gained his feet, and was fighting grimly to keep his place beside the half-conscious Whitie.

The six tough seamen were now sitting atop the bar, and in the hand of each there was a quart bottle of his favorite liquor. The two-hundred-and-forty-pound Dane had the bartender by the neck, and was holding him pinned face down on the bar beside him, as if he were a child. They were all watching the battle, but none of them could tell who it was fighting so valiantly in the center.

"A good man, whoever he is," commented the expugilist, taking a long drink from his bottle.

And then, from the center of the struggling group, rose a clear bugle-like voice—

"Bose—Malley—Larkin!"

"Strike me pink! It's One-Two Mac, hand 'e's callin' us!" cried the Cockney boatswain.

Like one man the six dropped their bottles and leaped from the bar; and shoulder to shoulder they swept forward and plunged gleefully into the fight. They struck with the impact of a solid mass, the Dane and Malley, the big pugilist, in the lead, and carried the entire group some yards along the floor before they lost momentum.

One waiter was knocked down and trampled underfoot, and left moaning in the wake of the battle; another was picked up by the huge Dane and tossed into the street, taking one of the swinging doors with him as he went. One of the professional thugs, both eyes battered shut and his teeth protruding through his lower lip, staggered clear, stumbled to his hands and knees, and crawled beneath a table.

"Everybody fer 'imself now," cried the boatswain, "and pick yer man!"

Captain Mac was smiling his leering, one-sided fighting smile as the six tough seamen broke through and surrounded him. Whitie Blake, his revolver again in his hand, was on one knee, and he gained his feet as the attackers fell away before the fighting seamen.

"Start 'em toward the street, bose,' snapped Captain Mac; and with a glance over his shoulder to make sure Blake was following, he fell in beside Malley and the big Dane. In a body they charged the waiters and policemen assembled in the entrance.

A policeman, waving his revolver, stepped to the fore and shouted a warning, then

leveled his weapon and fired. Malley, the ex-pugilist, grunted as the bullet scorched his side; then he threw himself forward in a sliding headlong dive, wrapped his arms about the policeman's legs and dashed him fiercely to the floor.

Captain Mac was driving before him the last of the three professional thugs, a grim square-faced man who fought silently and stubbornly. The big Dane, towering above them all, was clubbing down with his great arms all who stood before him.

The others, including the boatswain, had cornered a half-dozen waiters and seemed reluctant to resume the march to the street. Whitie Blake, his finger on the trigger of his cocked revolver, was searching the room with his eyes for Tub Watson.

"The street—the street!" cried Captain Mac.

He stepped in under a swinging blow and buried his fist to the wrist in the square-faced man's stomach. The thug groaned, doubled up, fell on his side and lay writhing in agony.

The little captain snatched at the revolver in Blake's hand, but stumbled over two men fighting on the floor, and went down in a tangle of arms and legs. He saw that one of the two men was a seamen, and instinctively lashed out at his opponent, a waiter. His fist smacked beneath the man's ear and stretched him senseless. The captain arose, shouted to his men; and in a body, Blake in the center, they swept through the door and into the street.

"To the other side—into the Canal Zone," shouted the little shipmaster.

There was a tangle of automobiles and horse-drawn cabs in the street, but Captain Mac and his men worked their way through; and after a few seconds found themselves on the other side of the railroad tracks that form the dividing line between Colon and the American Canal Zone.

"That'll do, boys," said the captain. "Everybody here?"

The boatswain looked around in the darkness, and quickly counted his men.

"All 'ere, sir—all but that white-'aired friend o' yourn."

"There he is," said a seaman, pointing back the way they had come, "tryin' to get around that auto. What the —— is wrong with 'im, anyhow?"

WHITIE BLAKE stood in the middle of the street. He seemed bewildered, and was trying frantically to get between the rear of a small black touring car and two frightened horses that were rearing wildly with their noses overhanging the tonneau of the automobile. The driver of the car, a negro, was screaming curses into the tangle of traffic ahead.

"You can't get through there, Blake," shouted the captain, starting toward him. "Come right through the car. Climb in."

Tub Watson appeared on the opposite sidewalk, and shouted loudly:

"There's the +—— in the middle of the street! Get 'im!"

Just as Whitie Blake was fumbling for the catch on the door of the car, trying to open it to climb through, a revolver spat fire from the opposite sidewalk, and his head bobbed forward. He slipped on the running board, but somehow got the door open, and fell in. With one hand still gripping the revolver and the other on the back of the driver's seat, he straightened slowly, and stood for a moment as if he did not know what to do next.

Captain Mac had reached the side of the car, and was reaching in to drag Blake out; but at that moment the latter put the muzzle of his weapon to the back of the driver's neck, and in a high-pitched, uncertain voice, shouted an order:

"Go ahead! Fast!"

The driver turned, stared into the yawning muzzle—and with a gulp of fright, threw in his clutch and pressed hard on the accelerator. The car jumped ahead, leaving Captain Mac behind, and slowed for a moment as another car swerved to get out of the way.

Again the revolver on the sidewalk barked, and Whitie Blake lurched into the rear seat. He twisted about, gripped his revolver in both hands, and leveled it over the rear of the car.

Tub Watson had run into the middle of the street, His smoking revolver was in his hand. He opened his mouth to shout—and a .45 caliber slug thudded in the roof of his mouth and literally tore out the back of his head. A surprized look swept across his face, and one hand lifted a few inches toward his mouth, then his knees buckled and he fell forward and stretched his length upon the hard stones.

Whitie Blake's hands opened and the

revolver fell over the rear of the car. He settled slowly in his seat, and gritted between blood-flecked lips—

"Drive on!"

"Which way, suh, which way?" called the driver over his shoulder. "Ah cain't go far, suh ——"

"Any way! Drive on!" gritted Blake, settling deeper into the cushions, and sighing tiredly.

The driver, his face a pasty gray, kept his eyes ahead and his foot on the accelerator; and the little car rattled wildly into the darkness.

On and on the car raced; along a wide road that paralelled the railroad tracks, past a graveyard, around a turn and beside a small body of calm water that twinkled dully in the starlight.

At last it shot into a cluster of lights beside a great dam. The driver brought the car to a sudden stop, and said plaintively:

"Can't go any further, boss. Dis is de end o' de road, suh."

No answer.

"Cain't go any further, suh," repeated the negro. "Dis is Gatun, suh—de end o' de road."

Still no answer; and the negro turned and looked fearfully into the rear of the car.

Whitie Blake sat huddled in one corner. His white hair on one side was now red with blood. His chin hung loosely. His eyes were open and staring vacantly skyward.

"My ——!" breathed the negro driver.

Mumbling incoherently, he turned the car and streaked back the way he had come.

CAPTAIN MAC got his ship under weigh at midnight, less than an hour after Whitie Blake had disappeared on the road to Gatun. At one o'clock, as he was putting the vessel on the course for the run across the Caribbean to the Windward Passage, the wireless operator came to the bridge with a message.

"Read it, Sparks," said the little captain.

The wireless man held the message in the oval of light that shone from the binnacle, and read slowly:

"S.S. *Hawk*.

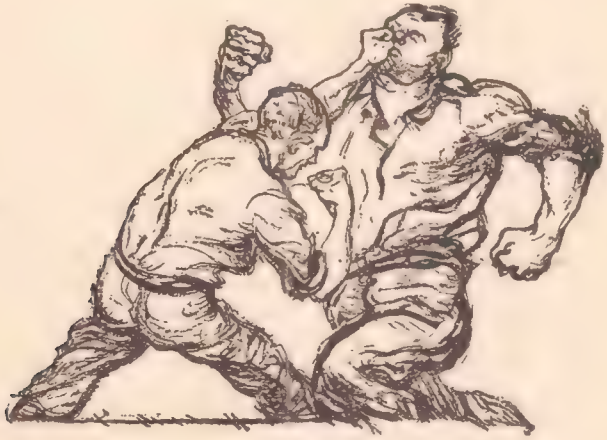
MASTER,

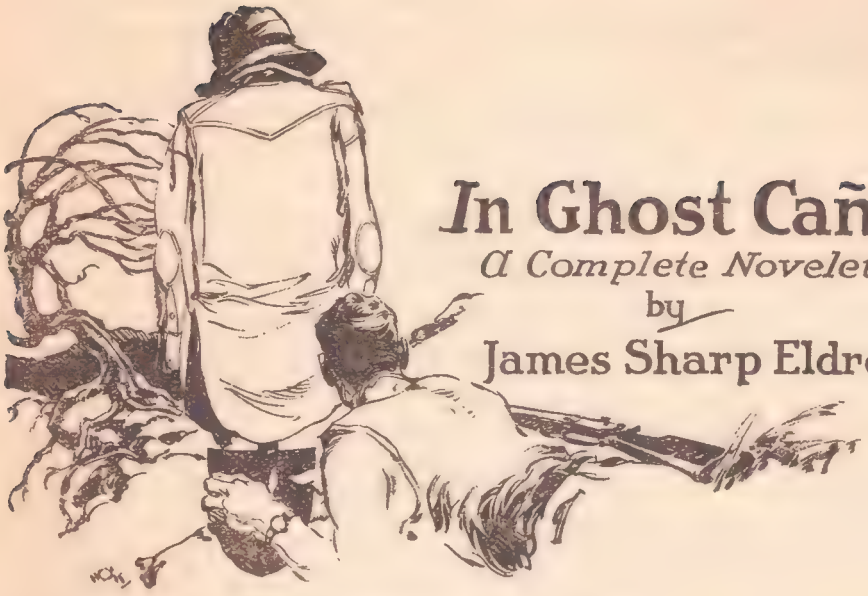
Blake is dead. Watson is dead. Maisie Blake is dead. She swallowed a handful of mercury tablets at eleven-thirty. I guess, as Whitie would say, it was all on the cards. JASON."

Captain Mac took the message, tore it to pieces, and tossed them to the warm breeze.

"On the cards, eh?" he mused.

He grimaced, and shook his head slowly. With the agnosticism of your true sailorman, he admitted that he did not know.





In Ghost Cañon

A Complete Novelette

by

James Sharp Eldredge

Author of "The Bird of Ill Omen."

JAMES HARWOOD RANDALL adjusted his fathom of lines and angles uneasily on the canned-milk box and fanned himself with his hat. He was hot as it was—on a June midday the town of Sage Mesa is one of the hottest places in the Southwest—and was conscious of the quiet scrutiny of the dozen loungers in the doubtful shade of the general store, and of which group he was a part.

The calm inspection embarrassed him. In any of the small New England towns he had known in the twenty years of his existence, people would have pried his business and ancestry out of him within five minutes of his arrival, but in Sage Mesa, with Western reticence, they simply sized him up and left him alone.

Randall had not adjusted himself as yet. He sat a little apart from the rest, an elongated figure in immaculate clothing that was distinctly out of place in his surroundings, and periodically blinked brown eyes behind horn-rimmed spectacles, endeavoring to appear as much at ease as he could.

Possibly Randall did not appreciate the fact that his position was unique in that, following his arrival the evening before, he had voluntarily elected to remain overnight in Sage Mesa, and travelers who did that were rare creatures. Generally they took one look at the town and clamored to move on. One drummer had started for the railroad on foot.

The town itself was a score of wooden and adobe buildings, placed at random along a very wide and dusty street that terminated at each end in a trail which lost itself in the billowy, sage-brush-whiskered uplands, that stretched, green and purple, to greet a sky of brilliant blue.

Far to the east were piled lavender shadows—mountains mellowed by the distance. They contained mines which freighted ore to the railroad through Sage Mesa. The town's convenience as a stopping point, coupled with its two wells, furnished the reason for its existence.

It was just a spot, weathered and forgotten, in the midst of distances. There was an immensity about the country that fascinated Randall and awed him a little; his life heretofore had been the cloistered one of a student; and he sniffed the tang of sage and regarded the bigness of it all with eyes that were very thoughtful.

His cogitations were interrupted when a startled *yipee!* came from the battered garage opposite the store and a small, speckled bundle shot from the open door, struck in the street and lay, whimpering. A murmur came from the assembled loungers; then they settled back uneasily.

"Burk don't feel so good this mornin',"

observed the storekeeper, flicking at a fly on his forehead. "Hadn't ought to kick a dog around that way. But I ain't goin' to interfere, and I kinda hate to own up to it, too."

"Yeah," commented the man next to him. "Burk's pizen when he's riled. No business runnin' a garage. Remember when that flivver he was cranking backfired on him and hurt his arm? Got an ax, he did, and plumb ruined it. Said no car under heaven could get the best of him. Yeh, he's pizen and he's just a big brute. He——"

Whatever else might have been said regarding the temperament of the garage owner was cut short when James Harwood Randall kicked back his box and rose. It was not a process of rising exactly, rather of unfolding, and in the time it required to reach an erect position, James Harwood finished becoming thoroughly mad.

"He—" his eyes squinted belligerently behind their glasses—"he kicked that *little* pup clear into the street!"

"Uh-huh," nodded the storekeeper, "and he'll kick out anybody else that monkeys, too. Nobody likes it, but we're waitin' for him to calm down. Leave him be, son. No use foolin' with a buzz saw. You can't do nothin' anyway."

Randall paid no attention to him; simply laid down his glasses and gave his coat a jerk. Then he started across the street.

"Hey—" the storekeeper brought his heels to the porch floor with a clatter as the tall one progressed—"where you headed?"

"I'm going to throw him out in the street like he did that dog!" Randall flung over his shoulder, and, taking immense strides, vanished within the garage.

IN THE shade of the store, one of the loungers rose. He was short, squarely built, and the most unkempt of the assembled lot of weather-beaten desert men from his scuffed boots with their worn heels to his bristling black whiskers.

At first glance he appeared thoroughly bad—the kind of person fond parents threaten their offspring with—but his eyes redeemed him instantly to any one who cared to look beneath the surface. They were clear and youthful, literally buried beneath shaggy brows like friendly spring pools in a mountain cove.

"That kid needs a hand," he grunted, and, casting about, snatched the home-made chair he had been using and brandished it as if it had been a club.

"Why don't some more o' you fellers git yer feet outa the tar?" he queried disgustedly as he turned to go.

But he was too late. Even as he stepped from the porch there came a bellow from the garage, then sounds of a commotion followed by silence and a whirlwind of arms and legs catapulted out of the door and somersaulted into the middle of the road.

For an instant a bearded giant filled the doorway and regarded James Harwood Randall as, arms braced behind him, Randall waited for the buildings of Sage Mesa to quit jumping around. Then the giant nodded his head slowly and turned back into the garage. He had said nothing, but in his expression, indescribably brutish, was that which froze in their tracks the loungers, approaching to aid Randall.

The unkempt, stocky man was first to recover. He dropped his chair, stepped up and knelt beside Randall.

"How much of ye's here?" he greeted.

"Considerable." The puzzled look on Randall's face vanished as he found the man's eyes, and he smiled. "I'll be trying again directly."

"Huh?"

"I intend to make another attempt to throw him after the dog. He's three times my size, and I've got to use strategy to do it."

The stranger squatted on his heels beside Randall and his whiskers rasped like a file as he drew a hand across them.

"Why don't you get a gun and go after him?" he finally asked. "Never heard of that thing—strategy. What's it like?"

Randall's smile widened.

"It's like this," he said, and went into detail, ending with, "May I count on you?"

"Shore. Count on 'Lame Duck' Wilson, pard. Come on—le's go git 'im."

Randall rose, and together they entered the garage. The giant in the rear straightened up from a bench, and, arms akimbo, regarded them.

"Want tuh land out thar ag'in?" he growled.

"Heavens, no!" Randall raised a bony hand. "Once is enough. I have come to attempt different tactics—to reason with you—to convince you, if possible, of the utter fallacy of letting your temper gain the

upper hand in such a shameful manner."

He fixed the giant's eye and approached, talking swiftly. Wilson nearly forgot his instructions in admiration of the flow of language.

"Not only is it undignified, but it makes you appear at a great disadvantage in the eyes of your fellows."

He gestured wildly as the giant's scalp twitched forward and his brows seemed to drop to cover his small, mean eyes.

"With a temper such as yours one loses one's perspective and—er—is unable to accomplish anything at all."

Randall was quite close now, and a cynical laugh rumbled from his antagonist's chest.

"I threw you out when I was mad, and here you go ag'in."

He raised his hands, but in that instant Wilson reached the proper position and squatted immediately behind the giant's knees. Randall shot his long form out like a bolt, catching the garage owner high in the chest, and the big man toppled backward over Lame Duck's form and crashed to the floor. And on to him wriggled Wilson, his hairy fists flailing.

"Come on, pard," he yelled, and the veneer of civilization caused by a life in academy halls and quiet studies, slipped from James Harwood Randall like a cloak. With a joyful yell he dived into the mêlée.

THREE minutes later the loungers of the general store, who had gathered excitedly outside, were stricken dumb by the trio the garage door disgorged. The giant was too big for Randall and his companion to kick out so they rolled him to the exact center of the street. Here he attempted dazedly to rise, but Randall promptly sat on him and wagged a bony finger in front of his nose.

"You treat dogs with more respect—hear?" the user of strategy admonished. "They're better than you and——"

Wilson, hovering for another attack, shook his head and interrupted.

"He can't savvy that. Lemme tell 'im." He bent down. "Yuh big stiff. Try kickin' another mutt an' we'll clean out yer two-bit garage! Hey—what's the matter, pard?"

For Randall, gasping for breath, had slipped down in the road. The horizon swam dizzily; iron bands were tightening about his chest and head.

"Nothing," he said with difficulty. "Just overdid. All right in a minute."

Wilson dragged him over to a chair in the shade. From somewhere came a water bag and he splashed Randall's face liberally. The tall fellow sputtered and smiled.

"Better?" queried Wilson, the expression of anxiety leaving his ruddy features.

"Yes. Thanks, old man," Randall sat erect and tried to pull himself together.

Some one helped him to his feet and grasped his arm. He never quite knew how it happened, but directly he found himself in one of the rustiest, most antiquated cars he had ever seen and with the speckled pup in his arms.

Wilson strained and grunted at the crank for a moment. Finally the engine wheezed and the car shook as if palsied. Then they were out of the town and bouncing over a road that was little more than a trail.

A breeze, dry and sweet, came skipping over the slopes and cleared Randall's head. He straightened in his seat, put the pup in a more comfortable position, being rewarded by a caress on the hand from a pink velvet tongue, and smiled expansively.

"I don't know where you're bound, Mr. Wilson," he commented. "But don't let it bother you. Keep right on going."

Wilson, crouched over the wheel like a squat ogre, nodded and said nothing for three miles while the car knocked and wheezed. Then—

"Workin' anywheres?"

"No. I'm looking for work."

Lame Duck grunted in reply and drove for three miles more. His manner of driving was unique. After putting the car in high gear back at Sage Mesa, he had pulled the hand throttle down a generous distance, braced his feet on the floor boards and paid no further attention to the controls, simply glued his eyes to the road a short distance in front and, in the language of the West, "let 'er buck."

It was an effective way of traveling but it had its inconveniences from the passenger's standpoint. Finally his shoulders heaved as he jerked the wheel, and the car appeared to leap from the road and set blindly across the sage flat, missing clumps of brush by a hair's breadth and bearing down on a temple-like cliff of red and purple that reared itself abruptly from the soft green level.

"Spring — yonder. 'S where — I'm

camped," ejaculated the driver between bumps.

Any worries of Randall's as to whether the car would ram the cliff were dispelled when the machine struck a stretch of soft going and stalled. Wilson grunted his disgust and settled to the business of cranking.

"Don't know much about the innards of a car, but this 'un's shore sick," he observed as he resumed the wheel. "Traded five good burros for it an' got stung."

"It can be fixed," Randall commented. "I've been listening to the motor, and all it needs is the carbon removed, valves ground, bearings adjusted, timing set up and the carburetor cleaned. I don't know much about the practical end, but I know the theory pretty well and I am pretty sure that I can put the car in better shape."

"Just so," agreed Wilson in a rather subdued tone—he felt he had to say something—and started the car.

"And the clutch grabs," yelled Randall a moment later when his head had recovered from being almost snapped from his shoulders in the resumption of forward motion.

AT THE camp at the shaded base of the cliff, Randall spoke again.

"Have you some milk or something we can feed the pup?"

"Got some canned cow and some biscuits from breakfast," Wilson answered, and rustled the provisions.

Together they watched the speckled pup tear into them, encouraging him whenever he stopped for breath. When the last scrap had vanished and the frying pan had been licked clean, Wilson stroked the little animal and ventured an observation.

"Sure pooches out when he gits filled up, don't he? Blasted little rascal. Swelled up like a lizard and you can nigh shove him in the milk can."

"Pooches out—pooch," repeated Randall thoughtfully, and grinned. "That's what we'll call him. Hi, Pooch!"

"We? He's yourn."

"Not by any means. You had a hand in his rescue and you have to take half the responsibility."

Randall chuckled and stopped almost in midchuckle for he had discovered he was not lonesome any more.

"Uh-huh," came thoughtfully from Lame Duck—he rasped a hand across his whiskers—"uh-huh," and began to whistle mournfully as he mixed the flapjacks for dinner.

The meal was commenced in the companionable silence of men who understand each other. Wilson was the first to speak.

"You say you ain't workin'. Howja git here?"

"Health broke down and they told me to come West, find some sort of outside employment and forget about books for a year. You might call me a student." Randall stretched his angular length beside the purling spring. "I've been at it all my life and was headed for the highest honors in college when I had to clear out."

"Uh-huh. But howja come to hit Sage Mesa? I didn't know folks outside the country knew it *was*," queried Lame Duck, and blinked in annoyance as, with a stubby thumb, he investigated a newly discovered hole in his faded overalls.

"To tell the truth, I don't know much about the West. I was looking for a sparsely settled section of the country on the map and came on Sage Mesa. There was nothing within a radius of several inches of it so I bought a ticket and—well, here are the open spaces just as I thought."

"You thought right," Lame Duck expectorated forcibly. "They shore are open. Too blame open sometimes. You'll find that out. But I like 'em. Say—how old are you?"

"Almost twenty-one."

Wilson nodded and rasped his beard for perhaps the twentieth time that day, a sure sign that he was pondering something. Then he burst into speech.

"Phut! Looky! How about you 'n' me goin' in partners? We'll prospect along some and when money gits low, why, we'll work some place and git up a stake. You come along an' we'll find a prospect worth a million. I—" again the wiry beard rasped—"I ain't had much luck fer the last fi'teen years but I'm due, pard, I'm due. Looky—when I saw you grin after you flopped in that street I said, 'There's the feller fer old Lame Duck to hitch to,' an' I'm most gin'rally always right about men even if I do miss the gold. How about it? We got a dog and—" he moved a hairy hand in a royal gesture—"half the *car* and the outfit's yourn. Phut! Well?"

Randall looked at the rusty car without smiling, then suddenly extended a bony

hand and the partnership was sealed. Moved by a common impulse, they rose and went to work on the automobile. After a time Pooch completed his nap, and, when not busy chasing lizards, checked up on the progress of the work and found it good.

TWO days later they packed and set out on a trail that led where the nose of the rusty car pointed. Sometimes they followed roads, and again went where none existed and the only map was in the mind of Lame Duck.

When supplies ran low they went to work, first at a ranch, then at the big mine in the mountains and later at a desert mine that seemed hotter and more isolated even than Sage Mesa. Here August found them and it was here on a night that the heavens were running over with stars, that Wilson sat up in his blankets and shook his companion.

"I cain't wait any longer, pard," he whispered hoarsely. "Le's pack up an' light out. I been a-dreamin' of Ghost Cañon and, boy, I *know* I'm right this time."

Randall shook the sleep from his brain and fumbled for his glasses.

"Wha-at?" he gaped.

"Come on. It's *callin'* me, I tell yuh."

Wilson's fingers cut into Randall's shoulder as he spoke.

It was the first time Randall had seen his partner excited and the agitation of the older man had more of an effect than his words. Randall gained his feet, plucked a patch of skin from a nose that would not tan but which went through an endless cycle of burning and peeling, and rolled up his blankets.

"IT'S this here way," Wilson spoke as the rusty car puffed through the night with the Silver Crown mine and their last job already in the distance. "I ran across an old side kick of mine I used to prospect with way back. He's muckin' over at the Silver Prince. We got to talkin' about the old times and Ghost Cañon and what-all and then I got to thinkin' and it came to me in a dream. Boy—" his voice shook and he gripped Randall's knee—"we're on our way to Ghost Cañon right now and we're goin' to strike it so rich yuh could wallow in it like a pig!

"*Gold!* Yuh can beat it outa the ore yourself! Slathers of it. Step on this thing and hurry up—somebody else might 'a' been dreamin'!"

"But what——"

Randall jerked the wheel and they dodged a sage clump by a scant margin.

"Ghost Cañon's way out from Sage Mesa nigh to the other end of the desert," Lame Duck interpreted his question. "A gash in the country like the bottom dropped out. Narrow—red an' blue an' purple. And way back yonder it was a bonanza. Then the vein petered out. It was deserted an' forgotten.

"Every one forgot it but some of the old-timers. But, boy, that vein's still there. It cain't walk off; it was just lost an' in the old rush days they didn't have no time to fool 'round lookin' for a lost vein. They went to better ground.

"And from my old side kick I found what I'd always thought: That there was a little strip in Ghost Cañon where the ha'nts is that ain't never been prospected. That's our claim. I been thinkin' about where that vein went to for all these years and now I know it's in that strip. I can *lay* my hands on it, I've dreamt it an' I know. I *know*."

Randall found the old prospector's fanaticism the most infectious thing he had ever come in contact with. But his student brain, which always reasoned to conclusions, was functioning.

"You say others may have the same deductions as you. Why haven't they gone to the cañon?" he asked, but there was a slight tremor in his voice.

"That's the —— of it. Mebbe they have. But not many, 'cause just a few of the old timers who knew about it are left. And they spend most o' their time watchin' each other to see if the other feller knows where the gold is. When one makes a break for the cañon, they all break. They ain't made any breaks lately.

"And we ain't worried about the hull valley. I'm thinkin' o' just a strip that was never staked. That's our meat. It's s'posed to be ha'nted. That's why ain't nobody bothered it, see? They're 'fraid it'd bust their luck. Won't bother me none. Never had no luck to speak of till now.

"Now you keep your trap shut about it. They's lots a desert undercurrents here an' some feller might shoot you to find out what yuh know. We got to go to Sage Mesa and git burros and strike out. Takes two-three days hard travelin.' "

"Sage Mesa is our next stop. Is that it?"

"Uh-huh."

Randall nodded in the soft darkness and reached under the wheel. His fingers found the throttle lever and pulled it all the way down. The car bounded forward, its lights bobbing in the darkness like the eyes of an agitated cat. Lame Duck grinned and hung on.

They made one additional stop beside refueling. That was when a jack rabbit streaked in front of the car and Pooch could not resist the temptation and bounced from his position on the seat like a dirty tennis ball. They had to wait fifteen minutes before he returned, tired, happy, and, as usual, unsuccessful. He had never caught a rabbit in his life, but he had unfailing hopes.

In a sunset that made of the world a golden paradise, they pulled into their old camp ground at the cliff outside of Sage Mesa. The next morning the burros, two in number, were purchased and the partners openly arranged to leave the car with the assistant of the garage owner, the giant himself being absent. The day after, they leisurely set out, knowing that by the conspicuousness of their movements, much suspicion as to their real objective had been allayed.

After the town had been left behind, Randall spoke the first word of the expedition since they had sighted Sage Mesa.

"How far up this way do we go?"

" 'Bout ten miles. Then we'll camp and let somebody see us. Tomorrow we'll circle the town and git to business. It's—phut!—strategy."

RANDALL threw back his head and laughed. Fifteen pounds heavier and with the hump in his shoulders gone, he was a healthy contrast to the bundle of bony arms and legs that had come flying out of the garage door two months before. With the exception of his spectacles, he was a desert type—lean and hard, with faded, dusty clothing that seemed a part of him, eyes wrinkled in a perpetual sun squint and a swell in his shirt that betokened the depth of chest beneath. He was changed in many ways, but he had not adopted the colloquialisms of the country nor those of his partner.

He finished laughing, plucked a patch of skin from the nose that would not tan, and yelled cheerfully at the burros.

They traveled over stretches swept by a dry wind that carried the pungent tang of sage. They passed masses of cactus and chaparral, and beds of sego lilies, contrasted in their whiteness to the brilliance of Indian paint brushes that grew here and there. Once they ascended a cedar slope and again went across a bench that was barren and parching. It was a changing country.

And then they reached Ghost Cañon. It was a gash, as Lame Duck had said, but made by a force too mighty and awesome to imagine.

The cañon was deep and its sides were red as if the earth had bled, and the blood had dried when its surface was broken. Wind and rain had softened the contours of the cliffs; there were no rough edges. Everything blended, even to the crystal stream far below that was guarded with green willows and silvery quaking aspens.

"Tain't but about a thousand feet down there," commented Wilson. "But it'll take us a couple of hours."

He tossed a fragment of red rock on to the rump of one of the burros.

"Gwan, Dempsey."

The name had been Lame Duck's choice. The other burro had been christened Hannibal by Randall, who had drawn on history for his inspiration.

Following the trickling stream at the bottom, they came on many reminders of the past of Ghost Cañon, when men had panned for gold along that stream. Prospect holes—graves of men's hopes—here a cabin with the roof fallen in. Once Lame Duck picked up a shovel, a rust-encrusted thing with a rotted handle, and commented on it.

"Some feller got disgusted and quit; heaved it as far as he could." His chin rasped. "This here spot looks kinda familiar like. Shore. Right over there is where Patterson killed Ham Stuart for tryin' to jump his claim."

"No!"

"Yes—saw it. Patterson went after Stuart with a pick handle and beat him up scandalously. Stuart had a gun but it didn't do him no good. Patterson wa'nt afraid of anything. They was men then. Hair on their bellies. *Phut!*"

As they picked their way along the narrow cañon bottom, Randall forgot their

quest. Deep down he was a dreamer and the spell of the cañon laid hold of him.

These places where men had hoped and labored and gone, where man had seldom been since the spot was deserted, seemed trying to tell him something.

He could visualize the miners of a generation before lining the little creek, bearded, roughly clad, panning for gold. *Gold!* The word was as potent as a drug. And ahead of him, the sturdy form of his partner, carrying on a continual friendly tirade against the burros, made the illusion more real.

Then Pooch suddenly darted forward. Lame Duck stopped and grunted. Randall gasped, and they watched motionless as a stranger burro with a pack on its back came out of a cleft in the cañon wall and approached.

The little, long-eared animal joined the partners' burros with every evidence of friendliness and dropped into place in the pack train. Randall was dazed. It meant but one thing to him: That into the cañon had come a stranger and—Randall felt the hair on his scalp prickle—the stranger had found the vein!

From deep in Lame Duck's throat came a sound. He stepped to one of the burros and whipped a rifle from the top of its pack. Randall found his voice.

"You aren't going to shoot any one are you?" he said hoarsely, and berated himself for the inaneness of the question.

"No," grunted Wilson shortly. "That pack's been on that burro for two three days. I can tell. He wouldn't wander from this water himself. They's somebody around here. Mebbe he's sick; mebbe he ain't."

They went forward slowly until the hair on Pooch's neck rose, and he growled. The strange burro stopped and shivered. The other animals did likewise, facing up wind. Lame Duck nodded as if to himself.

"Come on," he said. "They'll stay here."

At a point where the red walls of the cañon seemed to lean toward each other in an effort to unite—a place of perpetual shadow except when the sun was overhead—they found a man.

He lay face down, his skimpy gray hair oddly rumpled, his hands outstretched and clenched, and on the back of his shirt was a large spot caked with dry blood. Randall shuddered and removed his hat but his companion, after a steady scrutiny up and down the cañon, reached down and turned the man over. Randall gagged and turned his face away for the fellow's chest was a gaping hole almost as large as a plate.

"Potted! Shot in the back with a soft-nosed bullet," observed Lame Duck. "'S where it came out. He's pretty stiff; been dead maybe two days. Funny the coyotes and birds left him alone. *Uh-huh.* Go git some digging tools, pard."

Two hours later, Randall, who had welcomed the chance of physical toil, finished mounding up the grave and found Wilson beside him.

"Here," the grizzled man said. "Take your knife and cut somethin' in there for me. Like this: Joe Parsons, and when we found him. I dunno what day 'tis. And about him bein' potted and he can rest easy and not worry none 'cause it'll be straightened out." There was a moment of silence and he continued quietly. "I'd kinda like to do it myself, but I cain't write. And he was my *friend*."

RANDALL, his eyes holding a very strange light, soberly complied with his partner's request.

Once the thought of a man of Lame Duck's years not being able to read nor write would have been a topic of many day's humor for Randall. Now it seemed an incidental thing; what counted was Wilson's self control; what he held underneath a Jesse James exterior.

And another thought that was uppermost in Randall's mind was one of satisfaction that he was there to perform the service. He finished carving the brief epitaph, added an additional touch, and looked up.

It was just sunset and the mighty brush of the sun was touching the vast walls of the cañon with a thousand tints, touching too, the rugged form of Wilson, as he stood looking down on the grave of the man who had been his friend. Wilson was still composed but his eyes, usually so twinkling, carried a light that was deep, brooding. A light that betokened much.

"If you'd like," Randall said as he finished planting the little cross, "we'll cut this thing and go for a sheriff. The vein will always be here."

Wilson shook his head.

"Take a week to git one and a few days won't hurt. Might not need one anyway," he finished.

"OLD Parsons bein' potted like that kinda makes my dream look solid, pard," Lame Duck observed over the fire that night. "There's somethin' in this cañon, or they's a hot trail round here."

"Couldn't it have been an accident?"

"Mebbe it was—on puppose. They ain't goin' to be no more though. Better hit the blankets. We'll look around in the mornin'!"

"How about the fire?"

"We'll scatter it. No need of stayin' awake though. Pooch'll tell us if anythin' gits to snoopin'."

Nothin happened that night and they devoted the next day to a study of the locality where Parsons had been found and a reconnoitering of the cañon. Randall saw nothing suspicious and Wilson was noncommittal.

The second day they went through the place where the walls seemed attempting to touch each other. Beyond this pass the cañon widened and evidences of former habitation disappeared. At noon they passed a deep gash in the west wall, a crack so immense that it seemed a second cañon at right angles to the first, and a short distance farther Lame Duck halted and reached for the burro packs.

"Here's where we stake our claims, pard," he said. "Yonder's the caves that gives the place its name. Once they thought they's ha'nted and I s'pose they still are."

By this time he had stripped the packs from the little beasts of burden, and he whistled for the dog.

"Come on; I'll show you."

Randall found himself standing before three caves, yawning black orifices that were sufficient to appear haunted even had Lame Duck not stressed the fact. From each came a peculiar odor that caused his nostrils to wrinkle. Wilson picked up a rock, spat on it and motioned to the dog. Then he threw the missile into one of the openings and Pooch darted after it in hot pursuit. The place seemed to swallow him.

For a moment there was no sound. Then came a muffled, but thoroughly terrified yelp and the dog shot back into the sunshine, his tail between his legs. After him swooped three dusky shapes. The hair on Randall's neck prickled and he ducked instinctively. Lame Duck chuckled.

"Bats," he said. "Dunno why, but they been usin' them caves for a long time. Now—" he pointed behind to the leaning walls of the cañon through which they had recently passed—"they used to call them the Gates of Paradise 'cause all the gold that was ever found was up in that end. Nobody much monkeyed down here—skeered o' the spooks—'fraid they'd spile their luck.

"This part here's never been looked over right keerful, no surface indications o' color or anything. But back in that cleft, that's like a little cañon goin' in the side o' the wall, a feller ran a tunnel. He didn't strike anything 'cause he got drunk an' fell off a cliff an' everybody laid it to the spooks and no one monkeyed down here after that.

"But we're a-goin' to deepen his tunnel and if there's a sign there, we've got the lost vein. It's just like I dreamed—like I been a-thinkin' and a-dreamin' for fi'teen years. An' it's goin' to be *all* ours to do what we want with."

FOR a week they worked, one man on watch against the unknown enemy who had murdered Parsons and the other deepening the tunnel in the cleft. At the end of that time they had several sets of samples.

"Now," said Lame Duck, oddly tense. "We'll send these an' have 'em assayed. An' if they show what we want, we'll buy the hull cañon. Le's travel to Sage Mesa."

Randall shook his head.

"You've told me something about claim jumpers," he said, "and I think it would be advisable for one of us to stay here on guard. It would also be sensible for you to go and me to stay for I don't know whether I could follow the trail well enough to find my way back. And I'd attract attention while you wouldn't."

After some argument, the matter was settled and Wilson made preparations for departure.

"I can send these samples to Salt Lake like you say an' get an answer in four days. And three to go and three to come makes ten. You can look for old Lame Duck to bring in the bacon then, pard," was Wilson's summary of his plans.

"I'll give you twelve days," Randall replied. "And by the way, I put a little box of stuff in your pack, things I want to send home to my family. Mail it parcel post and wait until you get a letter back or a telegram for me. So long, old partner."

"So long, an' keep yore gun handy," Lame Duck admonished.

He picked up a rock and heaved it at Dempsey, and that burro, in the martyred way burros have, moved forward toward the trail out of the cañon, and Randall was left alone.

HE WAS not so lonesome as he expected to be. The open country had its hold on him too strongly. He missed Lame Duck's friendly presence at the camp-fire at night, but during the day, when he busied himself working the tunnel deeper in the cleft, he did not have time to be lonesome. And as he worked, he gloried in his strength.

On the evening that Randall drove the ninth stake into the ground, each stake denoting a day of his partner's absence, it was brilliant moonlight. Randall had put in a good day at the tunnel and had also found time to stalk four quail, shooting their heads off with a rifle. It was good marksmanship and he was proud of it.

The game, each bird with a slice of bacon skewered to its breast, was frying delectably in the pan. He had almost forgotten about the death of the man they had found nearly a month before and his sense of security had increased.

After driving the stake, he crossed the fire and picked up the frying pan to investigate its contents. They certainly smelled good. He lowered his face better to catch the aroma, then forgot quail entirely as the silence of the night was broken by a sharp *spang!* and the pan flew out of his grasp.

Cutting clearly through the silver moonlight, came a whip-like crack which echoed and reechoed against the cañon walls while Randall, his hand still partly raised, stared rather stupidly at one of the quail which had been thrown on the edge of the fire and tried to realize that the pan was torn from his hand by a bullet.

A venemous *spat* against the rock wall behind him, followed by another echoing crack as a second missile missed his head by inches, brought Randall to his senses and he leaped from the circle of the firelight, fell on his stomach and groped for his rifle.

His thoughts were reeling; he had no definite course in mind, but had gone for his weapon instinctively.

For a tense moment he waited, eyes blinking in an effort to pierce the darkness of the shadowy cañon bottom. He had not noticed the flashes that accompanied either report, but he knew from what direction they came; Pooch had told him that.

"Hey," Randall yelled suddenly, raising his head. "Look out where you're shooting!"

Spat—Crack! Spat—Crack! came the answer and he ducked and stayed down, blinking again. He was not trying to pierce the darkness now. He was thinking over his discovery.

He was being shot at intentionally. Whoever was shooting had recognized him in the firelight. That was obvious. And the unseen enemy was shooting coldly, dispassionately, trying to wipe him out, to kill him as calmly as if he had been a spider. It was so utterly different from anything Randall had ever imagined, and so confoundedly matter of fact!

The cañon was silent with a silence that was like a fog. Yet he could feel that some one was creeping up on him, watching, watching. Sprawled there on ground that was yet warm from the heat of the day, Randall felt like a swimmer suddenly thrown in the water, who was beating frenziedly but had not settled to his stroke.

He eased himself to a more comfortable position and waited, minute after minute. The silence bore down. The moon seemed to mock.

After an interminable time, Randall wriggled out of his shirt, and, remaining always in the shadow, constructed a rude scarecrow with it and his hat, using a shovel and a branch for the body. He contrived to raise it near the fire.

Again came the *spat* of a bullet and the report. This time he saw the flash distinctly, red and vicious. He let the effigy collapse and raised it slowly. Again the flash, but Randall was ready. The rifle at his shoulder bucked three times and angrily snapped its return.

Without waiting to see the result of his shooting, he hastily rolled a distance of several feet. It was a lucky maneuver for a veritable volley came in retaliation, and bullets ripped up the ground where he had been. The flashes were coming in pairs now.

Randall trained every sense on those spiteful tongues that split the shadow, and fired carefully. It was as if he willed the bullet on its course; the sights of the rifle

were useless. The astonished yell that came in response to his shot went through him like wine.

He was suddenly aware that there was lots of shooting, then the empty click of his weapon told him he had exhausted the magazine and he rolled to one side and filled it. He was tingling pleasantly and the bullets that whined and *spat* bothered him not at all. The hand that refilled the magazine was steady.

Flat on his stomach, he again emptied the magazine. Again his camp was riddled with bullets—harmless ones for Randall had slipped to the creek immediately after shooting and was filling the water bags.

Then he returned to camp and fired another volley. As the enemy in the shadow replied, he worked up a short distance and barricaded himself against the cañon wall. He had water for a three day siege, plenty of provisions and Pooch to help him watch.

THE night passed and Randall alternately fired and waited for a reply that never failed to come. The flashes had ceased to move forward and now remained stationary in the darkness, informing him that the people bent on wiping him out had settled for a siege.

He was at his post when the sun gilded the cañon the next morning and in the first dusky glow hastened to reenforce his barricade.

Down the cañon, near a slight bend and on the bank of the creek, he could see a pile of boulders. Over them appeared two slim blue tubes that occasionally moved and spat. That was all. Through the day the periodic firing continued.

It was literal trench warfare and the enemies had the advantage. One could sleep and the other watch. In the afternoon it occurred to Randall that they might give him a chance to escape. He had no intention of doing so, but he wanted to test the intentions of the two men behind those blue fingers.

It did not take long. He raised a handkerchief on a stick and waved it. With the other hand he cautiously raised his hat. Then he dropped both for the hat contained two additional holes.

That changed Randall. Before, he had rather enjoyed the affair after the first few moments of firing. Now he shot purposely, carefully, and his eyes gleamed as hard as the lenses of his glasses.

At sunset he saw Hannibal, the burro left with him by Wilson, and the animal that Parsons brought into the cañon shot as they meandered up to the camp, and the sight only increased the gleam in his eyes. Some one had found him in the way and was bent on putting him completely out of sight. Well—he intended to stay in sight and do some putting himself.

The night, interminably long, followed. Another enemy, the desire for sleep, made an insidious attack that was almost irresistible.

Sleep—just to relax where he was—the very thought transcended all else. The occasional impact of bullets against the barricade, the flashes in the velvet night became unreal. Weights were on his eyelids. Weights pressed his head toward his chest. He dared not sit still for more than a few moments.

Once he dozed and only Pooch nuzzling his cheek woke him in time to ward off a rush and send the attackers back to cover. After that they seemed content to wait.

The first faint streaks of morning found Randall with his ammunition nearly gone and the realization acted as a spur to his faculties. Slowly, a point at a time, he checked up his situation. To remain and run out of ammunition meant death like a rat in a trap.

To trust that his ammunition would hold out until the coming of Wilson was as foolish as to expect to make a successful fight against sleep. And if they got him they could easily bushwhack old Lame Duck as he carelessly hurried back with the news of the assays.

That was what brought Randall from a semilethargy and he secured Pooch to his belt, wasted two more precious cartridges on the boulders at the bend, and slipped into the gloom.

His feet were leaden as he pushed forward, walking clumsily and stumbling often. Had it not been for the dog he could not have found a path. Randall's first idea had been simply to rush his assailants, but, with the freer circulation of blood that the exercise caused, he realized that was folly and waded the little creek and circled.

With his progress he became more wary and as it grew lighter, dropped to his knees,

then to his stomach, taking advantage of every bit of cover.

After crossing the creek he was reasurred of the position of the attackers by a burst of fire from their entrenchments and proceeded with more caution. At last he reached a position to the rear of the bend in the creek and behind a large boulder, and waited.

The top of the cañon changed from purple to gold; the gold belt widened, coming down. It reached the caves, the floor of the cañon, and, at last, the entrenchments of the attackers and Randall caught his breath. The place was empty.

Then he saw them near his barricade, two men stealthily creeping on their stomachs. One had a bandage around his head.

For a moment Randall hesitated. Then the muscles of his jaws bulged and he raised the rifle and squinted through the sights. They dimmed, and the barrel wavered uncertainly.

He lowered the weapon and shook his head in an effort to clear his vision. This time the sights lined. The gold bead caught the bandage around the head of one of the creeping men, dropped lower, to his back. Randall knew he would not miss.

But his hand refused to pull the trigger. He lifted his face from the stock of the rifle and muttered:

"I can't shoot him in the back."

Then he yelled—

"Don't move!"

It was as if his words transformed the cañon into a place of feverish action and noise. The two men ahead leaped simultaneously for cover and a crashing roll, followed by a scattering, echoing clatter, wiped out the silence.

Randall was conscious of the rifle in his hands speaking and felt the pounding of the recoil against his shoulder. The man with the bandaged head leaped into the air and doubled up, striking the ground like a sack.

Then the other man was running, weaponless, down the cañon. The stock of the rifle punched at Randall's shoulder again, but he missed, for a slight puff came from the wall of the cañon almost at the entrance to one of the caves and the running man made a final, desperate leap and vanished within.

Then the golden morning turned to black and Randall fell forward.

IT WAS still black when Randall opened his eyes, but the blackness was of the night in which the moon had waned. The camp-fire flickered and the smell of coffee from a bubbling pot was as the incense of the East. Then Lame Duck's weathered face, carrying an enormous grin, bent above him.

"Hullo, Army," was the prospector's greeting. "Here, pour some o' this in your innards," and coffee, steaming fragrantly, appeared beneath his nose.

The liquid scalded him as he drank, but Randall did not heed it; he was questioning Wilson with his eyes.

"That was me and the sheriff makin' all that noise. We started shootin' just about the time you did. We didn't do no good—too fur away. You did consid'able.

"*Phut!* Yeah. I brought the sheriff out from Sage Mesa with me—met him there; he'd come over from Copper City on a errand, and he's gone back with them fellers. *Phut!* They'll be plumb easy to take back, too. They killed Joe Parsons—sheriff found that out—and they was figgerin' on killin' you and jumpin' this claim and then pottin' me.

"They might 'a' done it if I hadn't met the sheriff and follered a hunch. We come horseback and come fast. I left Dempsey up at Sage Mesa.

"That feller with the bandage on his head stayed alive long 'nough to confess and we got it in writin', hull thing. Slick, too. That garage feller was gone, 'member, when we left our car there? And then he was back when I fust came with the samples but he lit right out again 'thout sayin' nothin' to nobody.

"He was the boss o' the works. *Phut!* An' he might 'a' got away clean if you hadn't got him as he jumped in the cave."

Wilson nodded his shaggy head and grinned.

"Me?"

"Yeah. Your bullet glanced off the wall and drilled him clean as he jumped. He was the murderer. Other feller just a weak fool. Feel so you can read some?"

Lame Duck rummaged in his shirt and produced a soiled letter.

"Here's the assays."

"Didn't you read them?"

"Nope. I couldn't read 'em myself and I wa'nt goin' to let any of them fellers over

at the Mesa know what we had. And then, anyhow, *phut!* you're my pardner and you git to read our mail. Now go on. Le's see how much we make."

Randall's fingers trembled as he slit the flap of the envelop and, with Lame Duck bending eagerly over his shoulder, read its contents by the light of the fire. Then he threw back his head and laughed.

"They big?" came breathlessly from Wilson.

"Yes. They're big. We sent five samples. The highest one, they estimate, will run about four dollars and ninety cents a ton and the others less. Two samples were worthless. I was just laughing at the way it feels to fight like —— for a worthless mine."

"*Pard!*" came beseechingly. "Y'aint lyin' to old Lame Duck, are yuh?"

"No!" Randall smote the letter with the back of his hand. "It's there. The mine's worthless. The stuff that runs highest would lose us money getting it out."

Wilson slowly removed his hat and scratched his head while this sank in. Then he rasped his whiskers several times and finally expectorated accurately and carefully. After which, the storm broke.

He hurled his headgear to the ground, jumped on it and kicked it. It landed on a boulder and he kicked it again. His swinging toe came in contact with the hard rock and he danced around the circle of the fire, nursing the injured member, and saying many things. Then, as suddenly as he had started, he slumped on a pack.

"It's jest my luck," he grunted disgustedly. "Lame Duck. That's me. I never had anything yet that wasn't a blasted lame duck! Consarn it!"

He relapsed into muttering silence.

"Shucks. We aren't so badly off."

Randall laid a hand on his partner's shoulder.

"Listen—" he gestured toward the point farther up the cañon where the walls seemed to meet, now, in the coming of dawn, looming shadows.

"Our claim controls the Gates of Paradise and it's the finest dam site in the country. I know. I studied 'em. There's going to come a time when all these little towns and mines can draw from it and this country will blossom out just from our dam site, Lame Duck. Do you hear?"

"Uh-huh. An' how are we goin' to live, an' pay taxes and develop the thing so's we can sell it? I filed it an' I bought the claim across that cañon with those traveler's checks you give me; they was good. We're busted as flat as a bum flapjack, pard. *Phut!*"

"Looks that way, all right. You didn't get a letter for me, did you?"

Wilson slapped his thigh.

"Yeah. Plumb forgot it. Got a—telly-gram. Here."

After some fumbling, Wilson produced the yellow envelope, sadly crumpled.

"That's her."

Randall finished reading the message and laughed in a curious way, continued to laugh until Wilson came up to him and threw an arm across his shoulders.

"Steady, pard. That's all right if you did tell your folks you found a mine. Ne' mine. We'll find one. Don't take on about it that away. Come on now," as Randall continued to laugh, "calm down."

A moment later he spoke again, this time in an irritated tone.

"If it's so —— funny why doncha tell a feller about it."

"Caves—caves," gasped Randall. "We're going to sell them. Telegram is from a firm in New Orleans. They're sending a man here to look them over and they'll lease them from us."

"Caves? Them bat holes over yonder? Aw ——, give 'em to him."

"You just bet I won't. Lame Duck, those bats have put us up a nice stake. They've been in those caves for generations. And those caves are full of guano. It assays higher in nitrates than gull guano and it's more valuable.

"You've heard of the gull islands on the Great Salt Lake, haven't you? The guano from those islands brings in high prices per ton because it is used in the manufacture of fertilizer."

"Uh-huh," came rather dubiously from Lame Duck. "I knew a feller that worked out there, gettin' that stuff out once. He shore hated his job."

"Never mind that." Randall peeled a patch of blistered skin the size of a dime from his nose. "That box you thought was for my folks had guano samples in it that I took from the caves. I didn't tell you for fear you'd give me the horse laugh. Well, it worked. You sent the samples to a fertilizer corporation and they are going

to do business with us. It's all here in the telegram.

"There are several hundred tons of guano in those caves and if we handle it right we'll net anywhere from ten to twenty dollars a ton. The plans we had for shipping the ore will work for the guano, and it's a lot more valuable than any ore we'll mine here. Not so bad, hey, old timer?"

"Nope—it ain't," assented Lame Duck solemnly.

Then his beard rasped.

"But who in *blazes* ever thought yuh could make money outa a bunch o' bats?"

SAILOR'S SONG

by HARRY KEMP

O, I HAVE kissed my gal good-by
Because a good ship took my eye
Outward bound an' thunderin' down—
O, I have kissed my gal good-by.
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
Walk an' walk the capstan roun'!

O, my gal begged, but I had to go,
Because the good Lord made me so;
I told her some day I'd come back,
But now I had to sail away—
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
Followin' still the outward track!

O, my gal has a purty face,
But there's nothin' like a ship fer grace:
Skysails, royals, bellyin' wide,
Maintopgallant, mizzen too!
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
There's nothin' like a ship fer pride!

O, my gal, she has purty feet,
But nothin' like a ship so neat,
Treadin' down an' down the sea,
Walkin' over the tops o' waves,
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
Nothin' purtier can be!

Hear the thunderin' begin
As the good old ship steps in
An' all the winds of heaven take hold.
Ah, she's movin' free an' fine,
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
Out the canvas booms, unrolled!

So walk 'er down, the wind's off-shore—
Gawd, we're off to sea onct more!
Tramp 'er down an' lively, men!
Man the halyards; let 'er go,
With a heave-ho and a yo-ho
Gawd, we're out to sea again!

The CAMP-FIRE

A FREE-TO-ALL MEETING PLACE FOR READERS WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

WHO can tell this comrade what became of Didier Masson, Frenchman, and Tommy Dean, Australian? This 1921 letter from our cache will be of particular interest to aviators and Navy men. It was written before our rule against printing unsigned letters and anyhow the writer's reasons for not using his name are sound.

Empalme, Sonora, Mexico.

Having read the correspondence in the "Camp-Fire" on aviation in Mexico I am reminded of certain historical events which took place here, over the bay of Guaymas, in 1913.

BETWEEN July 28th and August 10th of that year, Didier Masson, a Frenchman flying for the Constitucionalistas in the revolution against Huerta, made four flights in a small Curtiss biplane in the endeavor to sink the Federal gunboats *General Guerrero* and *Tampico*. These attempts constituted the second effort in history to bomb warships, the first having taken place during the Italian campaign in Tripoli in 1911 or 1912.

The bombs were of the simplest type, being made of ordinary two-inch pipe with screw caps, filled with dynamite and provided with some sort of cap which detonated on impact. Though Masson failed to make a direct hit at any time, he came uncomfortably close on several occasions, and on the fourth and last flight, the crew of the *Guerrero* took to the boats as soon as he was sighted. The show finished when he was just over the ship and just after he had dropped the first bomb of the flight. The gasoline pipe to the carburetor broke and the engine stalled and he was compelled to volplane to a small and rather rough spot on the outskirts of Empalme, where he made a neat landing. Of course there was a tremendous racket of rifle-fire and occasional shells, none of which took effect. The machine was rescued by the Constitutionalist cavalry, who arrived in force and cut a breach through the cactus wide enough to wheel the machine over two kilometers to a safe spot behind a hill. His mechanic, (this was before the days of pilots and observers) was a young Australian named Tommy Dean.

I have heard that Masson was killed in France while adjutant of the American Escadrille. Is this true? And what became of Tommy Dean?

IT MIGHT interest Edgar Young to know that the Casa Piedra, which he mentioned unblushingly in "The Long Haired Jane," continues a decrepit existence, though most of its former personnel have scattered from Nogales to Tepic.

May I, though at so late a date, express regret at your decision to publish thrice a month? You have so relatively few Mundys, Howden-Smiths, Patrick Greenes, Lambs and Pendexters that I have misgivings for the nature of the residue. Not that you have not many others of equal worth in your distinguished company, but there are times when I am convinced there must be quiverings of the editorial conscience.

In the event that you make use of the airplane facts, for there are still many old timers here who witnessed the affair, will you kindly withhold my name? The local Government people are sometimes sensitive about foreigners who reminisce.

A word of warning to job hunters who may contemplate a visit to the West Coast. Things here are at their lowest ebb in ten years and there are no vacancies of any sort, professional or otherwise.—A. B. C.

OUR cache gives us this 1921 letter giving Baltimore a clear record in the war of 1812. One of us in the office, not one of our writers, made the slip in question in announcing a future story. We beat our foreheads upon the ground in shame. Our mistake was pointed out also by H. W. Walker of Baltimore.

Baltimore, Maryland.

As I suppose in the case of many others, I've been hanging around the Camp-Fire for the last six years, taking everything in and saying nothing, but now you have hit me in a sensitive spot, this town of mine, Baltimore.

IN OCT. 10th issue apropos "Plattsburg 1814," it says "Baltimore and Washington had fallen." Yes, Washington had fallen but, with all due respect to the British, when they reached Baltimore, they received a far different reception from the boys of the "Monumental City" and the "Old Line State" *viz:* the battle of North Point, where they landed with intentions of taking the city in the rear by land, also, where their C. O., General Ross, was shot and killed by two young Baltimore sharpshooters; the landing party against Fort Covington, now Riverside Park, where they were repulsed with a tremendous loss, due to a battery of old ship's guns manned by the Maryland militia, using glass, slugs, stones, etc., for ammunition; and last, the bombardment for a day and night of Fort McHenry, (now a base Hospital soon again to be a city park) during which our immortal "Star Spangled Banner" was written.

I had an old school master who often told us of his father telling him as a boy that for ten days after the assault on Fort Covington, the Patapsco was full of "red-coats," and how when news of the fall of Washington reached Baltimore every able-bodied man and boy enlisted in the militia, leaving only the women in the town with the servants and the old men. The fortifications and guns can still be seen in Riverside and Patterson Parks, and of course Fort McHenry. No, Baltimore *did not fall*, (were we not called "that nest of pirates," by the British on account of our privateers?) and a darned good thing it was for Philadelphia and New York, too, if not for the whole American cause.—VICTOR E. SCHMINKE.

P.S.—We celebrate "Old Wifender's Day" today. A legal holiday.

THERE'S a gleeful tradition in my father's family that one member went to work tracing out its genealogical trails. He found the first of the Cooks over here came in the *Mayflower* all right, but also that he was the cook on that amazingly populated vessel and took over as his own the name of his job, having, for some unknown but darned good reason, need to conceal his real one. So the investigator gave up the Cook branch and tried the James branch. Traced it out, in a collateral line, to the notorious James boys. And quit. Maybe there's nothing in this pretty tradition, but we hang on to it anyhow.

This just by way of showing that any natural prejudice on my part ought to be for, not against, the James brothers, since possibly they were some kind of *n*th cousins. But I overcame that prejudice, if any, years ago and take pleasure in passing on to you what might be called a farewell address to Jesse. It is from the *Kentucky Standard* and was sent to us early in 1924 by J. W. Norwood of Louisville, editor of the *Farmers Home Journal*.

I dare say no one ever lived who didn't have some redeeming qualities, but on the whole Jesse James was a pretty rotten mess. Attempts to make a hero out of him make me sick.

The spirit of Jesse James floated back over Nelson County Monday, March 10, when the "Donnie" Pence farm at Samuels, one of his favorite haunts in Nelson County during the hey day of his bandit career, was sold by Commissioner Morgan Yewell.

The farm was sold to settle a debt of Mrs. Sarah I. Pence, widow of the bandit's friend, to the Square Deal Store at Samuels. It was purchased by G. R. Clements for $6,500.

Older residents here who knew Jesse James shake their heads and declare that if he were living the farm would not have fallen under the auctioneer's hammer.

PENCE and James became fast friends during the war between the States when both fought under Quantrill, famous guerrilla. Pence settled down immediately following the war, and became a prosperous farmer and later, when courage was the

chief requisite of officers of the law, was elected high sheriff of Nelson County, curbing lawlessness that had gone unabated.

Jesse James and his brother Frank, with Bob Ford and Bob Younger, rode the frontiers of the Middle West ahorse with their outlaw companies robbing numerous banks in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. When pursuit became dangerous the famous bandit fled to his old friends in Nelson County and many are the points pointed out today as his secret place of abode. In trouble or in victory Donnie Pence stuck by his friend. It is told that a wealthy resident of Lebanon with his wife was traveling in the west and were held up and robbed of jewels by the James outlaws. So great was the influence for good of Pence over his friend that shortly after Jesse James' next visit to Deatsville the jewels were returned to the man at Lebanon.

The last time Jesse James visited Mr. Pence he remained six months. Returning to Missouri, he was slain by one of his confederates, Bob Ford.

THE feeling that law abiding citizens of Missouri held for the noted bandit is found in the closing words of the speech by William H. Wallace, a fiery young prosecutor at the trial of Frank James whose surrender quickly followed the death of his brother Jesse. The prosecutor said:

"Farewell, Jesse James, prince of robbers! Missouri cries a long, a glad farewell. Cruelest horseman that ever wore a spur or held a rein, seeming oftener like Death himself on his pale horse charging through the land than feeling man, farewell, farewell! Foulest blot that ever marked the bright escutcheon of a glorious State, farewell, farewell! Yes, thou bloody star of murder hanging for years like a thing of horror in our very zenith, frightening science and civilization from our borders—I condemned the manner of thy taking off, yet I could but join the general acclaim when, seized with the shock of death, we see thee reel in thy orbit and then plunge forever into old chaos and eternal night."

Frank James was well known by many persons yet living here. He died in Oregon about ten years ago. He made his last visit to friends at Deatsville in 1912, and while there lectured in the Sunday School of the New Salem Baptist Church. Persons there deny stories that the former outlaw would not take a front seat in the church or mingle with a crowd, because of a fear of being shot in the back.

The James boys never molested residents of Nelson County.

SOMETHING from Hugh Pendexter on the history back of his new serial beginning in this issue:

Norway, Maine.

Few school-children, nor many grown-ups, understand that the rivalry between France and England for the beaver-trade of North America was the cause of our colonial wars. They learn that the Abnaki tribes raided New England settlements and they labor under the impression that the aborigines were actuated by an overwhelming desire to kill and burn. While writing "The Bush Lopers" for fiction readers I have endevored to show the beginning of the long struggle between the two Crowns, carried on in our forests and along our shifting frontiers, each side seeking red allies, each side at times paying bounties for scalps, and each side often double-crossing their red allies when their aid was useless or had brought success.

BEAVER was *the* fur. A prime bearskin on the Niagara portage was worth only 75 cents in the Seventeenth century. Other furs were taken, but the voluminous correspondence between royal governors and the kings' ministers have to deal largely with the "beaver-trade." To that industrious animal can be traced directly the underlying motives for King William's War, Queen Anne's War, King George's War, and the culminating "Old French and Indian War" that cost France her North American possessions. So used were generations of Indians to be sought as allies by Corlaer or Onontio in every war based on the race for supremacy in the beaver trade that when Pontiac connived to drive the English west of Pittsburgh his Ottawas spoke of it as "The Beaver War."

AMONG the characters in my story who are not fiction, are Dubeau, called the "strongest man in New France." A year after the time of my story he was captured by the Iroquois and escaped from their camp after killing eight with an ax. He carried two women away with him and traded them to the Hurons for a road-belt to the Upper Lakes. Another is Turcot, outcast and alleged murderer. I do not know his fate.

Nicolas Perrot in his Memoirs says the Indians planned to massacre the French at Detroit when Durantaye was leading them and his white force to join Denonville.

Henri de Tonti, the Italian knight, "The Man of the Iron Hand," became a cadet in the French army in 1668, when 18 years old. He wrote his name "Tonty" and often signed his first name "Henry," His father, Lorenzo Tonti, a Neapolitan banker, originated the insurance system which is known as the "tontine" system. La Potherie, contemporary with Tonty in his history, 1722, says he had a wrist and hand of copper. Later chroniclers say the member was of iron. Winsor in his "Cartier to Frontenac," writes "Duluth was a cousin of Tonty of the silver hand."

I ALWAYS was much intrigued by the irrepressible and jaunty La Hontan and originally intended to have him figure prominently in the story. But he did not fit in, being off stage where I wanted to follow historical action except for his presence with Denonville at Irondequoit Bay. When Michitonka and his 80 Miamis returned home from the Niagara portage he met La Hontan at the little post on the St. Joseph.

Adario ("The Rat,") of my story is ranked by Tailhan next to Pontiac for bravery and political astuteness. Although distrusting the French at times he was persuaded to take a war-band against the Iroquois in 1688, but while en route he learned the Iroquois were about to make peace with the French. He captured the Iroquois envoys as they were traveling to Montreal, told them he was acting under orders from the French, and set all free except one. This man he took to Mackinac and so deceived the French commandant there that the latter had the prisoner executed. The Iroquois, blaming the French for all this, raided the St. Lawrence and massacred many near Montreal. Adario died at Montreal in 1701, after

being converted to the Christian faith. His body lay in state at the Hotel Dieu, clad in an officer's uniform, with side-arms. The funeral was marked by military usage, for he held the rank of an officer, by Indian rites, and the ritual of the Catholic church. The Rat was a great man.

THERE was a real Monsieur de Niagara, only he was a dog. He was the son of Twenty Sous (Vingt-sous), a dog Desbergeres took with him when he went to relieve the Fort Denonville garrison in 1688. The story is probably known to many of my readers and I will condense it. Monsieur de Niagara was used for carrying letters between Chambly and Prairie de la Madelaine. He was allowed a daily ration.

He was added to the garrison list. His name was called at roll-call, and someone always answered for him, "*En course*," or "*A la chasse*." For several years after his death his name was thus called.

At the time of my story there were posts at Frontenac (read Kingston), Mackinac and on the Illinois. France claimed to the Kennebec in the east and planned to push the boundary as far as the Hudson. Louis XIV would have none but Catholics in his New France and dreamed of taking over all of North America. So inferior in numbers, it is amazing France kept her hold on the continent as long as she did. But she was frozen out, just as the Dutch had been frozen out, and, with the menace of France on the north removed, the Colonies dared to revolt and in turn froze out Great Britain below the Great Lakes.

The failures of the English Colonies in the different "Indian wars" were due to their inability to work together. The cause of those wars was French and English greed for beaver.

I HAVE given more prominence to Nicolas Perrot than to Durantaye, for he raised the Indians for La Barre when no other Captain of the West could induce the far-tribes to accept the French ax. He rose from the ranks of the *coureurs-de-bois* and, very probably, had more influence over the Upper Lakes tribes than any other Frenchman. Carcajou to me is very real, for he types for me the audacity, the courage, the cunning, and the loyalty of all that wonderful wild brotherhood.

Fort Michillimackinac, invariably clipped to "Mackinac," resulted from Father Marquette's mission established in 1673 on Point St. Ignace, and La Salle's visit there two years later. The first defense, as found by La Salle, was a palisade and the garrison consisted of Indians. La Salle did much to strengthen this post. La Motte Cadillac also was there and further added to the strength of the fort. Then Detroit swung into the lead as fur and trading center, and in 1712 the settlement was moved to the south side of the strait where Mackinaw City stands. There the second Fort Mackinac was built. It was this fort Charlevoix described in vol 2. of "A Journal of a Voyage to North America." This fort was surrendered to the English when France lost out . It was captured by Pontiac's Chippewas and Ottawas on King George's birthday (June 4th), 1763. It was without a garrison for four years. At the beginning of the Revolution it was strengthened and heavily garrisoned. The English commander fleeing capture, moved his forces to the island of Mackinac in November, 1779, where the third fort of that name was built. It was occupied by the British until July, 1780, but did not figure in the war. It was turned over to the United States in 1796. A description of this last Fort Mackinac, as it was in 1880 is to be found in Uriah Tracey's report on it to Samuel Dexter, Secretary of War. It had a garrison of 57 men at the outbreak of the 1812 war. It was captured by an overwhelming British force of soldiers and Indians, and its capture brought many tribes to the British standard. The blockhouse on the hill back of the old fort was built by the British during this war. It was surrendered to the United States in July, 1818.

POSSIBLY I have gone into needless details about these three forts bearing the same name, but earlier in life, when beginning to nibble at history, I was often confused, as my teachers did not bother to explain how the fort jumped around so much. And now what belonged to France, to England, the medicine-place of Nanabozho, the supreme god of the Algonquian tribes, is ours for the second time. Let's keep it.—PENDEXTER.

Those who are curious to go into details of the period covered by my story will find the following helpful: Charlevoix's "A Journal of a Voyage to North America, 2 vols; Severance's "An Old Frontier of France," 2 vols.; Peter Kalm's Travels in N. America, 2 vols.; Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York, 15 vols.; Documentary History of New York, 4 vols.; Beauchamp's "History of the New York Iroquois"; Sawyer's "Fire arms in American History;" Shaw's "History of Currency;" "Narrative and Critical History of N. Am." vols. 4 & 5: Bancroft's "History of the North West Coast;" Parkman's histories; Winsor's "Mississippi Valley;" The Henry-Thompson Journals, 3 vols. edited by Dr. Coues; Gilbert Parker's and Claude Bryan's "Old Quebec;" Lighthall's "Montreal after 250 Years;" Hammond's "Historic Forts of N. America:" Blair's "Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi," 2 vol.; Morgan's, "The League of the Iroquois;" many of the Jesuit Relations.

THIS is out of a letter to Arthur D. Howden Smith of our writers' brigade from L. E. Stemmler, a bowyer and fletcher of the present day. As you may know Stewart Edward White is planning a hunting-trip to Africa with only long-bows as weapons.

There are a few of the ancient and honorable craft of bowyer and fletcher, stringster and arrow-smith still left. Once the sport of kings and king of sports, it almost expired a few years ago, but it is now coming back strong. Besides myself there are four others in my shop turning out bows, arrows, arm-guards, quivers, strings, targets and other archery accessories, and from the looks of things, the sport will grow until it holds a lusty place in the hearts of true woodcrafters and lovers of the out-doors.

I HAVE used the bow ever since I can remember; eight years old I guess I was when I got my first one—my dad made it. You see, he made just about the best bow-strings in the world, and

dabbled in long bows and arrows too, but strings were his long suit, and he taught me the trade.

THERE seems to be considerable opinion that the bows of "olde England," when archery was in the full flower of its glory, were of terrific strength, and the men who pulled them supermen. Unfortunately only two of these bows are preserved to us. They were recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, sunk around 1545. From Badminton we get the dimensions of these staves. Recently duplicates of these bows have been made and my dad made an exact replica of them himself. His weighed 68 lbs. Others record 65 to 70. Flight was about 225 to 240 yards. While these are sure enough husky bows, many men today could use them and, while I wouldn't want to shoot through a York or American Round with one, I could loose and shoot one fairly comfortably. Archery has as much technique and "form" as golf, if not more, and it isn't the strongest bow that shoots the fastest, lowest or farthest, but the man with the keen loose and a bow well within command. I use a neat little 45 lb. yew for myself and, since one rarely shoots at anything over 100 yards, it is plenty. Of course for big game one wants a bow that will drive a heavy arrow 75 yards and then throw a grizzly or lion besides. There is no game (pachydermatous animals excepted) which can not be laid low with a good bow and real arrows.

I can, do, and have made bows with the heft of the English long bows of old. I have one old yew before me that's pretty good, but a light bow (40 to 50 lbs.) is ample, more comfortable to shoot, less tiring and more satisfactory all around.

One writer, Stewart Edward White, a fellow out West I believe, who used to be a big game hunter with the gun, has been converted to the bow and he has written some good bits about archery, using one of the archer-hunters out in California for his hero. If you haven't been initiated into the fascination of the singing bow-string and the flying shaft, maybe I can get you to go with me to the woods somewhere. If you'll listen closely to the waxed cord's tale, it will conjure up Robin Hood and Little John, Will Scarlet and Friar Tuck, and like the lure of the Lorelei maiden entice you to become a lover of the bent bow and clothyard arrows.—L. E. STEMMLER.

A COMRADE analyzes this wonderful, perfect, practical civilization of ours. Now let some medieval, shallow-pated "patriot" rise up indignantly and abuse the comrade (and me, since I agree with Mr. Goodsill) with all the ugly names in his vocabulary.

San Diego, California.

Apropos of the remarks made by Messrs. John Paul Jones and E. E. Harriman concerning the treatment of the aboriginal owners of the North American Continent, and the comments anent our American civilization by our Camp-Fire chairman in the issue of September 20th:

THERE can be no doubt that we thoroughly demonstrated our fixed determination to acquire the lands of the red man by force and by cunning. Individually, when it seemed expedient to pay, we bartered rum for counties and so proved the superiority of civilized methods. Collectively, we grabbed the land and shot the objectors.

So we did, and so we do, and no smoke-screen of side argument can camouflage the fact that we have acted as a nation of murdering thieves. With it all, we never forgot our hypocritical self-righteousness. I was taught that one American settler was superior to a dozen Britishers and a score of savages. That we were always one hundred per cent. right and our enemies two hundred per cent. wrong. My youthful mind was stuffed with brag and buncomb, and, in parenthesis, I resent it keenly because of the time it took me to gain a readjustment of ideas. It was time worse than lost, because it retarded my development. You know—"The mill will never grind again with the water that has passed."

Dean Inge says, "The European races established their ascendency over the whole planet, introducing the blessings of civilization to the savage peoples whom they exterminated." That was, as has been pointed out, inevitable. There are, however, many degrees of ruthlessness in conquest, and I am sure we have little to be proud of. Let us ask George E. Holt how he would compare our honored methods with those employed by the French in their conquest of North Africa.

AS TO our civilization, our editor challenges the "wisest, craftiest and stupidest of us" to demonstrate that civilization, progress and development can be analyzed down to anything other than more inventions, more money, more greed. I fear that this idea pretty well expresses our national conception of civilized progression.

I have read somewhere that "Civilization is the sum of intricacies whereby every man's personal dignity is preserved and respected." That doesn't exactly describe our brand of civilization, nor would it appear that we are heading in that direction. Consideration of the susceptibilities of others has always been present in the relations of individual members of highly developed civilizations. We, I fear, are too busily occupied with inventions, money and greed to waste our time in the cultivation of courteous forms of communication.

We have no time and but little taste for cultivation, apart from the cultivation of dollars. Our sense of beauty and harmony remains undeveloped, and as a result, we mutilate the face of nature and we build our towns and cities in an ugliness beyond compare. In addition to this, we slaughter our wild life and we destroy our natural resources in greed and selfishness.

ALL of which may be due to the alleged fact that only two per cent. of us can justly lay claim to education in the broader sense, while the rest of us go through life gaining our daily misinformation from the deliberately misleading printed scandal sheets that corrupt our morals and befog such intelligence as we were originally endowed with. The scandal sheets argue that we don't deserve anything better. Possibly they are right.

The average American who goes for a "look see" in foreign lands leaves America's shores with the calm conviction that ours is the most highly developed civilization on earth and that ours is the only real enlightenment. A short absence confirms him in this attitude because strange customs and diverse methods in the employment of time serve

to irritate him and to accentuate his longing for a quick return to "God's Country." (It is impossible to convey an idea of how much misunderstanding the rapid-fire tourist accumulates on a visit to foreign countries.) But a longer stay, a residential sojourn, for example, gives him a gradual perception of the commercial as well as the ethical value of beauty, and he also begins to understand that a well balanced proportionment of activity is essential to health and happiness. He gains respect for carefully thought out legislation and, last but not least, he acquires knowledge of the fact that individual liberty does not mean individual license, and that it is not incompatible to temperance and sobriety.

It is borne on his mind that man does not really prefer to act the brute, and when separated from conditions of misery and ugliness—above all from ugliness—he may be expected to carry on in a fairly decent manner.

FOREIGN opinions of our American civilization are not often revealed to us in our individual contact with foreigners. The older races do not always feel the urge to express their mental reactions. They are restrained by courtesy and often by self-respect from comment upon features of our contact." I don't remember where I read this, but I know from observation and experience that it is true. All right, what the —— do we care for the opinion of frogs or wops? That is the point. We don't, or at least we pretend that we don't, but if we paid some little attention to their opinion and to the ripe experience of those who have been in the business of creating civilizations very much longer than we have, we might learn of processes that would help to lighten our burdens and lessen our woes.

Why should our Government and our nation be subject to the blackmail of organized minorities? Why the eternal graft in our politics? Why the thousands of ill-considered laws breeding confusion and contempt of authority? Why do we support great armies of pestiferous cranks? I think it must be because of our ignorance; of the fact that greed fills our minds to the exclusion of everything else. We will pay the price of greed and ignorance, and by the time we get the final bill I believe we will find that we have "Paid too much for our whistle."—NORMAN GOODSILL.

SPEAKING of taking away our personal liberties, how's this? The convention of the associated master barbers adopted a resolution at Chicago in November pledging its members not at attend a showing of a certain star's photoplays as long as he remains bewhiskered. It makes you laugh and most of us don't wear whiskers anyway, but it's not so funny as it seems, being another instance of labor's showing itself just as selfish, unjust and undemocratic as capitol.

Labor tells you you can't take a job offered to you, even if your family are starving—and uses physical violence if you dare assert your American right to work wherever work is offered. Labor tells you you can't employ any one for any kind of work unless he belongs to a union. If you dare assert your American right to employ any one who is willing, they will not only boycott you but use force to prevent your men working for you.

Yes, capital rides over us rough-shod but labor seems to do the same when it gets the chance. The body of the people are goats for both. When will they wake up?

A 1922 letter from our cache, telling of two large rattlers. Can any one show a skin of a bigger one?

Donna, Texas.

There is an article in your issue of Nov. 10th, called "Rattle-snakes Unlimited." Now as to how large they grow, don't know, but I have a skin of one seven feet and one a trifle less than nine feet.

I just know a snake that size could not catch me, though he might track me easy.—COL. FRANK S. YERGER.

WHEN we first read John Webb's story that appears in this issue we asked him some question that isn't now important and that I've forgotten anyway, but it brought forth an interesting letter from him which I pass on to you.

Incidentally, out of all the thousands of profiteers who made money at the expense of the comfort, health and very lives of the men at the front how many have been punished? A fraction of one per cent or thereabouts? Do we call them thieves and traitors, as they are, and murderers, as some of them are, or do we accept them on whatever social plane their money has bought for them?

And we call ourselves civilized?

Long Branch. New Jersey.

You will note that I have changed the sentence mentioning the kind of feed that was purchased by the Government for the soldiers in the trenches. I did not make that assertion without some foundation, however. During the war I was chief boatswain of an Army transport, one of the largest freight-ships in the service, and I know that many of the cans of food that we carried were so full of gas that they looked like footballs. I know of at least one concern that made a business of buying up condemned jam and preserves, re-boiling it and selling it to the U. S. Army purchasing agents. The food that we had aboard ship was far from appetizing; but I have had many a poor doughboy thank me with tears in his eyes—figuratively speaking—for allowing him to mess with the seamen or firemen. Whenever the ship was in an over-seas port there was a soldier at my elbow at every turn—"Say, Bosun, how is it for a feed? I haven't had a decent thing to eat since I've been in Europe." I hated to turn them away, and my hardest job of the war was to keep the "moochers"

down to a decent maximum, so as to avoid collision with the ship's paymaster. The food was like everything else that was given the soldiers—rotten!

SOME time ago I came upon a book of travel, in the New York public library, and read that Colon isn't near as wild and woolly as it is painted by "writers of lurid fiction"—or words to that effect. I know Colon better than I know any other city in the world—not excepting Long Branch! Mrs. Webb and I spent our honeymoon in its best hotel, the Washington, and I—alone this time, praise be!—spent a short and very unpleasant "vacation" in its only jail. This is the same jail that Rex Beach tells of in "The Ne'er-do-well;" I do not know how he acquired his color, but I know from personal experience that he did not overpaint the picture. The night that wound up with my arrest was a wild and hilarious one, and I remember only snatches here and there, fleeting pictures that needed much discussion and comparing of notes to put in their proper order.

IT WAS about midnight. The chief mate and I —I was second mate—were walking along Front Street on our way back to our ship, when the mate, pointing at something across the street, accidentally jammed his forefinger into the eye of a passing negro. The negro was a big man, and pugnacious; he swung about and drew back his fist, and before the mate could apologize he received a smash on the jaw that caused me to marvel at the firmness with which human heads are fastened to shoulders. But the mate was tough, and he came back; and in a moment he and the big negro were rolling over and over on the sidewalk.

A friend of the negro, no doubt becoming nervous as to the outcome, decided to pitch in, and did so; and I, taking this as my cue, did likewise. The four of us fought merrily, with the mate and I getting a bit the better of it. There were a number of cabs drawn up along the curb, and the negro drivers, seeing their friends getting licked, came running, their whips reversed to strike with the heavy butts. Then from all directions came friends of mine and the mate's, officers, engineers and sailors of ships in the harbor. To sort of equalize matters, they met the whip-swingers halfway. Then came more negros, more seamen, some Canal Zone men—"muddiggers"—beachcombers, and several policemen—in thirty seconds there was such a riot as made even hardened Colon sit up and take notice.

I REMEMBER standing in the middle of the sidewalk and swinging as fast and as hard as I could, going down, getting up, and swinging some more; I remember being hit on the head with a rock, then with a chair—where the latter came from I do not know—and of diving under the chair and going to the pavement with the wielder. The mob spirit was aroused and loosed, and from all about I could hear cries of "Kill 'em! Kill the —— Americans! Smash their heads!" We were greatly out-numbered, of course, and had our backs to the wall, and it was a case of stand up and fight or be trampled underfoot.

I saw the police getting through the crowd, and held up my hands to show that I was willing to be taken peaceably. But they wouldn't have it so; almost before I knew it one policeman had hold of me from behind while another was trying to hit me on the head with his stick, and a negro was swinging at my face with the butt of a whip. And me reaching skyward with my hands! The result was that the battle started all over again. A husky Irishman, second mate of a little freighter, downed one of the policemen and the assistant-purser of my ship tripped up the other. The Irishman hissed in my ear: "Run, Webb—run like ——!"

I STARTED to run; but I was confused, and partly blinded with blood in the bargain; instead of running across the street and into the Canal Zone, I headed back into Colon. I ran into a cabaret, mixed it for a moment with a policeman in the center of the dance-floor, and shot out the back door and into Battle Alley. A long line of pursuers was at my heels, others of the mob had gone round the block and were coming from both directions. Somehow I managed to get out of Battle Alley and into Tenth Street, then into Bolivar, still running and fighting. By this time I was alone; some of my friends had gained the Canal Zone and others, I found later, were under arrest.

OF A SUDDEN I found myself in front of the police station—I had actually fought myself to the jail doors! I surrendered, and was taken in. I was beaten in the court room, in the corridor leading to a cell, and again in the cell. My cuff-buttons, ring, stick-pin and money were stolen, while I was half-conscious in the cell. The Irishman who had helped me came in later—with three policemen hanging to him; and with him came a little American seaman whom I did not know. They were both robbed and beaten as I had been, though we did our best to make things interesting for the robbers and beaters. The next day friends of the Irishman and the little seaman paid fifty dollars for their joint release. Later I was released upon payment of seventy-five dollars. We were not tried. The Colon police cared nothing for trials; what they wanted was money.

Now the point I make is this: Is anything impossible in a city where the police beat prisoners who have surrendered, and where prisoners are released, without trial, upon payment of ransom?—JOHN WEBB.

OUT of the cache comes a 1922 letter from our old comrade, Dr. W. C. Robertson of Honduras:

Galeras, Olancho, Honduras, C. A.

Some time ago a chap in Tegucigalpa wrote you about a mythical being, "Comelengua," which, as the name implies, eats cattle's tongues. I was going to have a swipe at him at the time, but got under the weather and it was forgotten.

THERE is, of course, no such animile. It is in the category with our old friends the joint, the hoop, and the horn snakes. There is as much "proof" for the comelengua as there is for those, and it is equally valuable.

Reasoning natives explain the loss of the tongue as they explain that of the hooves—spider-bite. Some say *gusano*-bite. The *gusano* referred to is one of the hairy fellows whose every hair is a sticker and poisonous as the dickens. It is a matter of

surmise so far as I am concerned for I have never observed the spider or the *gusano* at work, but I *know* those of both species which could easily produce the effect, although not to the extent of choking the cow on her own blood as asserted by a Mr. Perry. The process would be sloughing, according to my information.

RE THE awful end of being choked by their own blood, would like to know how they do it. Hemorrhages from the lungs or stomach find their way to the mouth for exit, and one would suppose that blood, once in the mouth, would act in the same way and get outside the animal, not try to contravene a natural law and seek to take the other direction. Not being up to a great extent in comparative anatomy, I shall admit that there may be some special reason why a cow would act that-a-way. My silly idea is that, to choke on its own blood, a creature would have to be so near demise that a little choking more or less would not matter.—W. C. ROBERTSON.

AS TO the manner of Pike Landusky's killing. A letter from Walter J. Coburn of our writers' brigade:

Carmel, California.

In "Camp-Fire" of July 20th. I read a statement by B. M. Bower. Said statement claims that Kid Curry killed Pike Landusky from ambush. Now I hate to argue with a lady but I just "nacherally" have to correct that statement. Pike was killed in Jew Jake's saloon. The fight was his own choosing. And anybody that knew Pike will maintain that he needed killing. He was onery, was old Pike, and treacherous. Proof of last assertion is backed by the fact that he tried to shoot Dutch Louie, his partner, across a card-table. Louie cleared the table in one jump, took Pike's gun away from him, and held Pike down until he'd cooled off.

MEBBYSO B. M. Bower did live close to the Little Rockies and the town of Landusky. Near as I recall, she comes from the Bear Paw range. Or perhaps down on the Shonkin, even further away. Anyhow, she was far enough away to confuse the killing of Pike with the ambushing of Jim Winters who had killed the Kid's brother. Jim Winters was shot from ambush. Who did it, nobody knows. Jim had *poco* plenty enemies in the Little Rockies. Any one of a score of men may have ambushed him. Some claimed it was Harvey Logan (The Kid) who did it. But they have no proof.

I got the story of Pike's killing from an eye witness. Don't care to mention any names. But this man is an old-time cowman whose word is as good as any man's oath with me, and I've known him all my life.

The Circle C ranch, where I was raised, is a few hours ride by horseback from the Curry ranch and Landusky. And I know whereof I speak when I say that Kid Curry killed Pike Landusky fair and square.

A FEW weeks ago, it was my privilege and pleasure to meet Fred Bechdolt. We spent several hours discussing the above mentioned killing. Did not read Bechdolt's "Cassidy and the Wild Bunch" but I did read B. M. Bower's statement in "Camp-Fire" and it's wrong.

Am not upholding Kid Curry. Nor am I going to write any articles or stories about the bunch. For why? Because "dead dogs" may be "sleeping dogs" and I aim to let 'em lie. I've known "outlaws" who would share their last smoke with you. I've known law officers who "built a rep" by downing an unarmed man.

I was at the old ranch the night the posse trailed the gang after the Wagner hold up. The posse's mess-wagon had gone on ahead and got lost. They hit the ranch late at night and stayed over till the next afternoon. I could spin some funny yarns about that chase.

Can *sabe* how B. M. Bower got her stories mixed. There are a lot of queer tales told about the Curry gang. Those that know the real facts usually keep their mouths shut. They aren't the talking breed. Have read Bower's stuff, some of it, anyhow, and liked it.

MY IDEA in writing this is not to call the lady a liar. Nor to hang any halo around the Kid's sombrero. I just want to correct the impression that Pike Landusky was shot down in an unfair fight. In the saloon were Jew Jake and others who called Pike their friend. The Kid did not shoot until he had to. He had whipped Pike in a fist fight a few minutes before. And for good reason. The Kid sat on a poker table. Pike strode up and down in front of him, alternately abusing him and telling him he had acted wrongly to whip a man older than himself. Then he went for his gun without warning, thinking he had talked the Kid into being off his guard. Only the fact that Kid Curry was a faster man with a gun, prevented Pike from committing a cold-blooded, treacherous murder.

Those are the bare facts. The feud between the two men was of long standing. I heard Pike's own daughter state afterward that the Kid was justified.

USE any of this in "Camp-Fire" if you wish. I hate to mess up in an argument but feel that the mistake should be rectified.

Also, have not consulted Bechdolt regarding this letter. Just read that Bower article and sat down to pound this off.

Will coil up my rope now and tie 'er back on the saddle. If I've spoken out of turn, just put it down to an ex-cow waddie's sense of fair play toward an outlaw of whom much wrong has been said. The Kid was bad but he was no bushwhacker, bet on that.—WALTER J. COBURN.

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54. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure.* Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

58. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

59. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure.* Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure.* Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

64. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practice; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns,** including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.*

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure. United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered

by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

K.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

L.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

M.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

N.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. Cox, care *Adventure.*

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The **Pan-American Union** for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men,** Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. D.

Hiking, Ohio to North Carolina

IDEAS on equipment and fishing:

Request:—"Have had some experience in tramping, camping, mountain-climbing as a junior in college work in forestry and as a sailor.

I am going to hike from Portsmouth, O., to Black Mountain, N. C.—Black Mountain is sixteen miles east of Asheville—and do not want to follow the main road any more than possible, because I like the great open spaces. I will rough it all the way through.

The questions are as follow:

1. What route would you follow if you were making such a trip?
2. What kind of packing outfit do you think best? So far I haven't found one that gave satisfaction in the rough mountain work.
3. What about this section for trout-fishing?
4. What game animals might one chance to see?
5. Would I pass through or near any State or national forest?

I will appreciate any advice, information or criticism you will send.

If this should by any chance go up for print please use the initials"—L. D. E., Morrow, O.

Reply, by Mr. Barbour:—Indeed I do know where Black Mountain is. I once lived a few miles east of it at Old Fort, and have covered all that mountain country for the U. S. Forest Service.

I would suggest the following route: Ashland on the Ohio River, south across the Cumberland plateau of east Kentucky to Cumberland Gap, Johnson City, Tenn.—headquarters for White Top and Unaka National Forests—Erwin, Tenn., up the Nollichicky River, thence up South Toe River, over Mt. Mitchell, thence southwest to Black Mountain. All the region about Mt. Mitchell is in the Mt. Mitchell National Forest, whose headquarters are at Asheville.

Your packing outfit depends on whether you are going to sleep out or at farmhouses, etc. I assume the former: Small shelter or pup tent, rubber poncho, blankets depending on season of year, but at least two singles; frying pan, nested coffee pail and another pail, tin cup, plate, fork, spoon, etc., belt ax, compass, fishlines and hooks, waterproof can of matches, few simple drugs, toilet kit, heavy shoes, camp moccasins or sneakers, khaki riding breeches, leggings, flannel shirt, light duxbak coat, sweater, felt hat, change of wool socks and underwear, few staple groceries such as tea, coffee, sugar, bacon, etc., main bulk of food to be bought from time to time along way.

Not much trout-fishing till you hit the region around Mt. Mitchell, but good bass-fishing all the way. You might see any game animal including bear, deer, turkey, etc., and undoubtedly you'll see squirrels and other small game quite abundant. The best time for the trip would be in late spring or early fall. Take topographic sheets of the region you pass, cut into squares and mount on to muslin in convenient-sized units.

The full statement of the sections in this department as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

A Quiet Place in Ontario

A FEW facts to keep in mind when you're planning your vacation:

Request:—"I would like to ask your advice about a suitable vacation place near by my home but northward in Ontario. A quiet spot where I could camp out for a week, away from the large summer resorts and beaches where there is a great deal of amusements and a noisy crowd, and where there are good bathing, fishing and boating. I would like to be near a place where I could secure supplies and rent a boat. By near by I mean a place not

more than ninety or so miles away."—R. G. ANTHONY, Niagara Falls, N. Y.

Reply, by Miss Robinson:—A quiet place about ninety miles from Niagara Falls, with good bathing, fishing and boating? You have given me a large order, and one not easy to fill because you have stipulated distance. East of Toronto, anywhere from twenty miles east, might be found such spots along Lake Ontario. But—isn't that rather a large lake for your purpose?

I can not speak of the fishing in this lake either. Rather fancy it is fished out.

Again: Some fifty miles east of Toronto are the Karwartha Lakes, good fishing and bathing in places, but well summer-touristed. You might, however, get some quiet spots here, but just where I can not say as to exact location. You would have to "spy out the land" for yourself after arriving. If you wrote to the Canadian National Railway office at Peterboro, Ont., a nice city situated almost on the Karwartha Lakes, they could give you more specific information concerning it.

Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto, at its nearest point about thirty miles north, is a lake of some thirty square miles. Lovely quiet spots all around it, and you could take the Radial either to Sutton or to Newmarket from Toronto and reach it; then hunt out a spot at a farmhouse or small village—say Beaverton, Ont. Boats could be rented at any of these places, I am sure. There is a variety of choice in this latter lake, I know, and the distance from your home is about what you want.

Farther north than this are many places I could tell you of, but the distance is too great for what you want.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Versatile Arkansas

MINERALS, crops, fruits, timber:

Request:—"One of the studies that are now being reviewed at the Lindblom High School concerns the geography of the State of Arkansas. I have been told that you have been kind enough to assist high-school boys by furnishing the various data, such as maps and other information pertaining to any State. If it will not be too much trouble to furnish this information, I will surely appreciate it and thank you in advance."—RALPH OHLINGER, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. Thompson:—Personally I have no maps of the State of Arkansas, but if you will write the secretary of the State, Capitol Building, Little Rock, Ark., he will send one to you, or to C. L. Stone, passenger agent, Missouri Pacific Railway, Railway Exchange Building, St. Louis, Mo. Also they will tell you about the different products.

Arkansa produces coal, iron, zinc, copper, diamonds, kaolin, silver, lead and aluminum, and is one of the largest producers of timber, especially hardwoods. The richest farm areas are on the eastern side contiguous to the Mississippi River. though many parts are subject to overflow. The crops are chiefly cotton, corn, wheat, oats, alfalfa. Much livestock also is raised. The alluvial lands begin to cease at about the central part and are rough hills to the western part. In these hills many cattle are raised; also the mining is done here, and worlds of apples, peaches and small fruits are raised. These hills begin to slope some and lose their ruggedness as they terminate in Oklahoma.

If I can be of further service please advise.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

The German General Staff's Opinion of the A. E. F.

YOU fellows belonging to outfits that don't get praised, remember that it's the enemy talking. As for the "A. A." man who answered this inquirer, he's one of you:

Request:—"I would like to know what kind of opinion the Germans had of our army in France. I have been told that they did not think much of the Americans. Is this true? Enclosed find stamp and envelope for reply. Do not publish my name."—H. R. C., Cheyenne, Wyo.

Reply, by Mr. Fleischer:—Whoever told you that the Germans did not think much of the American army in France is either misinformed or he quoted some one whose statement must be taken with a grain of salt.

The opinion of the German General Staff and the Intelligence Section of the German General Staff is published in pamphlet form, a reprint from another publication by Mittler, Leipzig, and the following are quotations therefrom:

Of course, the Germans knew that the Americans were coming to France. They did not doubt the fact that millions would eventually appear, but due to the unrestricted U-boat warfare they believed that the tonnage to carry troops would not be available; and since General Ludendorff had laid plans for a great offensive, the general conviction was that the Americans would arrive too late.

The German General Staff knew to a T the number of troops called to the colors, when and where from transported and all that. They merely hurried preparations for the last great effort and in March, 1918, went to it. The rank and file of the German army were told that the Americans would arrive too late and that these troops would lack training and could not stand up against the veterans of four years' warfare.

For this reason the impression the First and Second Divisions made upon the German soldier was a deep one. It must be considered that the nerves of the Germans after their last great effort and after four years of hell, were worn to a frazzle. (So were those of the French and English.) The local successes of Cantigny, Belleau Wood, etc., showed the Germans that the American regular was a force to be reckoned with. These troops had physical freshness, physical and moral superiority which counted. The Americans showed a certain ignorance of danger and for this reason indifference to danger. This fact accounted for heavy losses. Inexperience again gave the Germans a small local success at Seicheprey against one battalion of the 26th Division.

At that time (June, July, 1918) the Americans showed insufficient tactical training; physique, personal courage, initiative were almost unbelievable. The equipment and supplies excellent. It is stated that these troops (American) in their state of training would not have been successful against the German army of 1914. (I personally disagree with the writer of the article, because 1914 was still open warfare; and show me any army in the world that can stand up against Americans, especially regulars and marines.—F. F.)

The rapid advance and the success of the Germans, in the great offensive months of March to May, 1918, forced the Allies' backs to the wall. True, it cost the Germans dearly in lives which could not be replaced. Victory seemed assured. It forced General Pershing to abandon his plans to train and equip an American army, and he placed his division at the disposal of General Foch as they were. Some of them went into battle directly from motor trucks that brought them to the front.

FROM this time on the American divisions were at the most important sectors of the Allied front line, and the initiative passed from the Germans to the Allies. The Americans were there and so showed it. Untrained divisions undertook actions which the French did not dare to undertake, and the American advance was one victory after another.

It must be considered that their divisions numbered 28,000 effectives. Opposed to them were Germans, whose morale was low, due to their being underfed, receiving bad news from home and other matters.

In July the German lines were defended by groups of six to eight men every 100 to 200 meters. Battalions had a strength of 200 rifles. (An American battalion was 1,000 men.) In October there were but two or three officers, a few machine guns and 40 to 80 men to a battalion. One hundred to 150 men were the exception and battalions of 200 men a wonder. Divisions were dissolved so as to fill regiments to 1,000 men.

(Note of A. A. Editor: While the figures given by the writer of this article are no doubt true, the Germans had organized a machine-gun defense by newly created machine-gun units; and while infantry battalions were not fully officered and manned these machine-gun companies certainly were, and the defenses were a continuous chain of strong points with overlapping areas of artillery protection and by no means easy to take.)

The American divisions were classed by the German General Staff as follows:

Excellent shock troops: 1st, 2d, 28th, 32d.

Very good troops: 3rd, 4th 26th, 42 and 89th.

Good: 82d, 27th, 78th.

The remaining are held as doubtful and mediocre. Specially censured is the 79th for their failure to take Montfaucon on time, thereby spoiling an entire plan of action.

The author of the article finishes as follows:

"We lost as Napoleon did in 1813, because the enemy's masses simply crushed us."

To sum up: The German High Command had all the respect in the world for the A. E. F., but feared to let the troops know it in advance, otherwise their plans of attack would have failed, as they did anyhow as soon as the "*Feldgrau's*" found out who was who. The remarkable thing is this: That they paid no attention whatsoever to the fact that our leaders, who never had more than a brigade under them, could lead millions of men as well as, and better than, their own generals.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

How to Skin a Skunk

YOU "case" the brute:

Request:—"Please tell me all there is about trapping; how to skin animals, how to preserve the raw furs, what bait to use, etc. Would like to know the best way of skinning a skunk. Do you know a good concern buying raw furs?"—PAUL A. SCHLOCKOW, Kelseyville, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Thompson:—It would be impossible in a letter for me to tell you all about trapping but would do my best to advise you on a particular kind if you will tell me which you are most interested in and whether you mean to tan raw furs or else preserve them until you market them.

Skunks' hides are cased; that is, cut a little to each side toward the legs, about to the middle of the back of the hams, then work out the hind legs, then pull over gradually as you would take off a glove, using a skinning-knife when it resists, but be careful not to cut the hide until you get to the shoulders. Then work out the front legs by pushing them back.

After this is accomplished you must have a stretcher to dry it on the shape of the animal. If you take a redwood shingle of sufficient length and about one-quarter inch thick and dress it off nicely it will do after cutting it to shape. Many take a tough twig and use it to dry the hide on. Do not attempt to stretch a skunk hide in any other manner.

When shipping you can turn it fur side out, but not before it is thoroughly dry. Do not keep furs in a damp place or where they can be attacked by rats or mice.

A fine buyer of raw furs is Funsten and Co., St. Louis, Mo.; at least this firm buys more varieties. F. C. Taylor and Co. of the same place is also a good fur house. St. Louis is the largest market for raw furs in this country and, I think, pays best prices of any market.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Moving Day in Central America

THE inquirer asked the same set of questions of our Japanese expert, Mrs. Knudson, whose answer appeared in the December 30, 1924, issue. This is how the peon class does it:

Request:—I shall greatly appreciate your telling me how families in Haiti, Santo Domingo and Porto Rico move."—A. N. C., Aurora, Colo.

Reply, by Mr. Emerson:—The people of the countries you mention differ somewhat in the methods of daily life. You do not state just what class

of people you wish to know about: but as you mention "hut" I presume you mean the peon, or common laborer class. During the past twenty years as a mining engineer I have employed many of them on various works and have been in many of the houses or huts, so I can give you the different items from personal observation, viz:

These houses are made of poles. The poles are covered with a kind of palm-leaf called *Yaguas*. These are laid like shingles on the roof and sides and tied with narrow strips of the same leaf, which when dampened is very flexible, enough so as to tie it into knots, but which upon drying will shrink enough to draw the big leaves tight against the poles. This makes a strong hut with water-tight roof and a good protection against the wind. There are generally two doors, back and front, but no windows.

The floor is in some instances made of the outside slabs cut from a palm-tree, split out from four to six inches wide, the length being cut with a machete before the wood gets too dry. These slabs are held in place on the floor-poles by a few nails, and the upper side of the floor slabs is often brought to almost a piano polish by the constant rubbing of dirty clothes, grease and other things, for it is not the custom ever to wash the floor.

In many instances the entire family sleeps on the floor, with nothing to soften the hardness thereof and no covering, other than the clothes they wear during the day. The household tools, such as tables and chairs, in some instances, were not necessary as the floor acted in the capacity for both.

THE other things include a cast-iron kettle of twelve-inch diameter by five inches deep, called *caldero*. in which the coffee beans are roasted. The roasted beans are then crushed by being pounded in a wooden mortar, called a *mortero*, which is made by hollowing out the end of a hardwood log some fifteen inches in diameter by three feet high, to a depth of a foot, by the application of fire and then scraped to a smooth surface by a machete.

The pestle, called a *majadera de mortero*, is also of very hard wood, shaped by patiently chipping it into shape with a machete. The kettle referred to above is also used for making a stew, called *sancocho*. To this stew they add roots and leaves, to suit the taste. The boiling of green plantains called *platanos* is done in this very useful household tool; the platanos are used in place of our potatoes.

The man of the house always wears a machete, a sword-knife hung from some kind of belt around the waist (in countries where the laws do not forbid such weapons), and with this knife he cuts the cane, firewood, brush and grass and defends his family and himself from enemies. The edge of the machete is kept very keen, as it is his proudest possession, and some of the peons are experts in the use of it.

A very important item in the lives of these pople is the tobacco they use for chewing, which is called *tabaco hilado*, pronounced by the native as if spelled tar-bar-ko-e-low. Both the men and women chew this. It is very strong; is made into ropes and sold by the *vara*—about thirty-two inches. I tried this tobacco *once*, and was perfectly satisfied that the kind made in the U. S. A. suited me much better.

As to moving, the fact of the matter is that they don't move from the place where they were born except in case of fire, for there are cases where ten generations have used the same house with renewals of roof and sides. There is generally a space under the house that is used by the pigs, dogs and hens.

The reason they don't wish to move is because they haven't any better place to go to, so to come down to facts, the only reason for moving is when the house burns. This is very seldom as their stove is made of three round rocks set on dirt surface; and in between these rocks they put fagots, called *leña* pronounced len-yar, enough to boil the water needed for their cooking and washing and coffee.

I HAVE seen a family on a visit to some friends a few miles distant and their trunk was just a rice-sack perched upon the man's head, the woman carrying the last baby and the other kids following in procession down the mountain trail in single file.

Some of my men lived more than three miles from the work, and it was surprizing how quickly they made the distance barefooted.

The peon likes to put his house on a nose or promontory overlooking a valley, and you can see these huts as you go along the trail. The *pelon* or *motero* has other uses, one of which is telegraphic, for with it the next family on a promontory can be told that strangers or the police are coming up the valley, for a certain number of blows has a certain meaning, and the sound can be heard for a long distance. By this method of telegraphing by friends, many a criminal has been able to escape the clutches of the police for when the police arrive at a house they find only a woman making coffee for *them*, which they drink and go on their way looking for the man.

The bread (*pan*—pronounced as if spelled parn) is made and baked in the towns and not in the houses. This bread is in various shapes, having special names for each of the shapes, such as *pan francesa*, *pan sobado* (pronounced commonly sobow) etc. At one time the Spaniards would not allow the natives to carry a cutting edge of any kind, so the bread was made with the four corners so rolled that when baked it could be easily broken for distribution to the family members without use of knife.

There is practically no end to this story unless I make one by saying that moving in the U. S. A. sense of the word is not done in the tropics among the peon class. In case of fire they would certainly move quickly, and all of their stuff could be carried away on their heads in rice-sacks.

Human loads are carried upon the head and not over the shoulders. Have seen a woman with a five-gallon coal-oil can balanced on her head. The can was without cover and filled from the river to within an inch of the top, and no water was spilled as she climbed the mountain trail to her home.

The girls are fine walkers, light and springy, straight and supple, until they take a mate; but from that time on they rapidly grow old.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address J. D. NEWSOM, *Adventure*, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ARMER, John; Barbour, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence; Bailey, Donald; Bateman, Leonard; Bonter, Max; Braden, James Blain; Bunce, William J.; Connolly, Jack (John Joesph); Erdtmann, Gustave, F.; Hart, William J.; Hart, James; King, John (Turk); Larrimer, Ned C.; Lovett, Charles; Pariera, G. W. Mrs. (nee Jessie Isabel Kelly); White, George.

MISCELLANEOUS—Anderson or Burns; F9 F. A. Captain R. W. McClure, B. C. F. 9 F. A. 1917-19, Arthur Houston Pvt. 33 Sec. F. 9. F. A.; Kyd Gyp and Shanghai; Ralph Write to your old pard; would like to hear from old comrades who served with Bechuanaland African Charter Co. Police from 1888 to 1894, before and during the Matabele War; would like to hear from any one that was overseas with me in Co. "I" 11 Regiment U. S. Marines.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ANNIE. Why don't you write to me? We left W. Farmington and are now in Cleveland. Any information will be appreciated by her brother.—Address STEVEN MIKO, 3329 W. 31st St., Cleveland, Ohio.

RUFF, HAROLD. Resident of Troy, New York. Your old buddy would like very much to hear from you, also "Chick" Barth, if you know his address. Please write. —JAMES BLOOMENTHAL, 2521 Fern St., New Orleans, La.

GILLIGAN, SIDNEY ROGER. Enlisted with the undersigned and Joe Roberts in the *Voluntarios del Occidente* in the 1912 uprising. When last heard of was working for a paper concern on Gold St., New York City. He came from Holyoke, Mass. Any information will be appreciated.—Address N. I. HELLER, O'Reilly, Habana, Cuba.

PARIERA, G. W., MRS. (née Jessie Isabel Kelly). About five feet two inches in height, medium build, blue or gray eyes, age about forty years. Has lived in Wynberg, South Africa. Last heard of in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1916-17. Any information will be appreciated by her son.—Address CHARLES W. KELLY, care of *Adventure.*

RALPH. Write to your old pard Phil.—Address R. 2, Brooks, Maine.

BATEMAN, LEONARD. Formerly of Baltimore, Md. and Minneapolis, Minn. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. E. BATEMAN, Lake of Isles, Minneapolis, Minn.

HART, JAMES. Missing since December 4, 1912. Age eighteen years, height five feet ten inches, very dark hair, gray eyes, fair complexion. Left boarding school at Clifton, Staten Island. His aunt would like to know of his whereabouts.—Address No. 8373, THE SALVATION ARMY, Missing Friends Dept., 120-130 W. 14th St., N. Y. C.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

Please notify us at once when you have found your name.

KING, JOSEPH STANLEY. Last heard from in California. Please write to your old comrade.—Address R. RENNARD, 6107 Van Court, Detroit, Mich.

ANY information as to the whereabouts of P. J. Lynch who was in Central America in 1910-11; Robert Amburn and F. J. Temple who were in Mexico and Central America in 1910 11; Noel Dunning who was in Tampico in 1915-16.—Address JOHN WINTHROP, Sgt. Ph. D., Apartado P Postal Letra "I", Caracas, Venezuela, S. A.

ERDTMANN, GUSTAV. Last seen twenty-five years ago. Last heard of in Nampa, Idaho. Age forty-six years, five feet ten inches tall, tailor by trade. Was running on Socialist Ticket about ten or fifteen years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address E. C. ERDTMANN, 327 W. Wheeler St., Oklahoma City, Okla.

DEVINE, WILLARD. Your brother wants you to write home. I have mail here for you from home.—Address JOSEPH MCNEILL, 30 Cooper, W. Lynn, Mass.

KILGORE, MILLARD F. Last heard of twelve years ago. Age thirty-three years. If Owen Bates should see this, please write. Or if any one knowing Millard in the past years would only write me or show these few lines to him.—Address MRS. M. E. TOTTEN (sister), Weldona. Colo.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

C. P. E. Please write to me through my friend in pink house, and she will forward letters to me. I am working in a hospital in C. Francis is in working boys' home, Robert is boarding in A. Have bright hopes for next summer at A. Had summer boarders and expect to do fine next year. *Adventure* has a letter for you from me.—LILLIAN VERA C.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

PARSONS, HARRY. Failed in effort to reach you. Hope this will meet your eye. Had a severe illness in summer. All right now. Anxious to get in touch with you.—Address JOE M.

BARBOUR, MR. AND MRS. CLARENCE E. Barbour is a jewelry salesman and jeweler. Lived in Manteca, Calif., for some time, and supposed to have gone to Illinois. Please write.—ROSS, Box 2, Manteca, Clif.

KYD GYP and Shanghai. Write to KEN. *Bayonne Times,* Bayonne, N. J.

WOULD like to hear from any one that was overseas with me in Co. I, Eleventh Regiment, U. S. Marines. —Address J. W. PRICE, 5619 Prairie Ave., Chicago, Ill.

PETTERSON, JOHN or any one who remembers the death of A. J. Knoore or Scholtz who died en route to Russia, November, 1912.—Address D. A. V. W. W. 121, East 34th St., Tacoma, Washington.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CONNOLLY, JACK (John Joseph). Born May, 1882, in Sandy Mount, Dublin, Ireland. Brown hair and eyes, height about five feet eight inches. Last heard of in Bronx, New York in 1910. Was at that time in the theatrical profession known as the "dancing juggler." Any information will be appreciated by his sisters.—Address MRS. HARRY CONSELMAN, 110 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ATTENTION. F. 9. F. A. Captain R. W. McClure B. C. F. 9. F. A. 1917-1919. Arthur Houston private 3 sec. F. 9. F. A. Information is required as to the whereabouts of these men. Houston's father was connected with the Dennison Tag Co. of New York. McClure is thought to be in the Texas Oil Fields or Kansas City, Kansas. Any information will be appreciated.—Address DAN HOFF, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the January 20 or February 10, 1925, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of inquirer from this magazine.

ANDERSON or Burns; Armer, John; Bailey, Donald; Bonter, Max; Braden, James Blain; Bunce, William J.; Challis, Anna; Erdtmann, Gustave F.; Farr, Goebel; Franz, Frank Futtage; Hart, William J.; Howe, Frank A.; Jackson, James Bangle; King, John (Turk); Larrimer, Ned C.; Loosley, Earle; Lovett, Charles; Newton, Lucy Caroline; Reed, Mrs. Jack E.; Rose or Ruzicka, Charlie; Sharp, John R.; Stewart, Robert; Wesley, R.; White, George.

MISCELLANEOUS—Moussier, Alfred Roy, Hollywood; William Allen, any member of Co. F. 7th Reg. U. S. N.; R. D. S.; would like to hear from old comrades who served with Bechuanaland African Charter Co. Police from 1888 to 1894, before and during the Matabele War, please write.

UNCLAIMED MAIL—Bognoras, William; Cantrell, C. W. Mr.; Webb, Charles N.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MARCH 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

DANNY SIMON'S FIRST CASE — *G. W. Barrington*
The deputy's courage was spiced with caution.

THE BULLY OF ZAMORA — *Thomas Topham*
His gun bore twenty-two notches.

MUSTANG BREED — *Alan LeMay*
Rattlesnake loses his venom.

THE BUSH LOPERS A Five-Part Story **Part II**
Carcajou, on the Upper Lakes of New France, hears ghosts laughing at him. — *Hugh Pendexter*

RABBIT FOOT — *L. Paul*
"*Gold Tooth*" was a fighter and he needed it for luck.

ASHES OF THE SUN — *Ernest Lyons*
The Florida cracker was a born fire-eater.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Talbot Mundy, Robert Simpson, Percy Charles Chandler, Everett Saunders, W. C. Tuttle, Gordon MacCreagh, William Byron Mowery, Harold Lamb, Leslie McFarlane, and John Dorman; and short stories by Warren Elliot Carleton, Eugene Cunningham, Arthur M. Harris, W. Townend, Barry Scobee, F. St. Mars, Rolf Bennett, L. Paul, Douglas Oliver, Walter J. Coburn, Ralph R. Perry and others; stories of Romans in ancient Britain, swordfishers off the Grand Banks, brass-pounders in South America, white men on the Fever Coast, explorers in the Amazon, Russian fur-hunters in Alaska, castaways in the South Seas, cowboys on the Western Range, Elizabethan cosmographers in Lapland, salvage pirates off the Florida Coast, Canadians on the Western Front.

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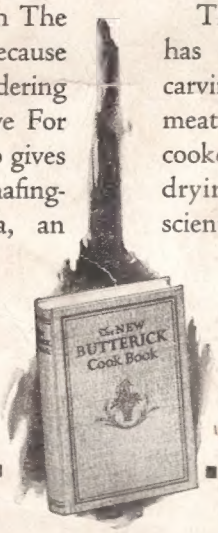

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